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# Parental Perceptions of a Summer ESL Parent Institute: A Retrospective Case Study

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PARENTAL PERCEPTIONS OF A SUMMER ESL PARENT INSTITUTE:  
A RETROSPECTIVE CASE STUDY

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
Requirements of the Degree of Doctor of Education

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2012

**SETON HALL UNIVERSITY**  
**COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SERVICES**  
**OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES**


**APPROVAL FOR SUCCESSFUL DEFENSE**

Doctoral Candidate, **Scott Cascone**, has successfully defended and made the required modifications to the text of the doctoral dissertation for the **Ed.D.** during this **Fall Semester 2012**.

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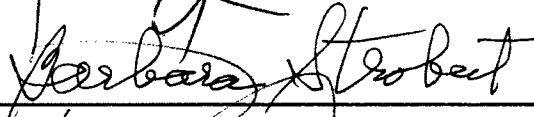
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The mentor and any other committee members who wish to review revisions will sign and date this document only when revisions have been completed. Please return this form to the Office of Graduate Studies, where it will be placed in the candidate's file and submit a copy with your final dissertation to be bound as page number two.

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I owe a debt of gratitude to a number of people without whom this professional endeavor could not have been achieved. First, I wish to express my thanks and love to my family. To my wife Diana, my soul mate, my biggest fan, thank you for all of the sacrifices you made. To my three little princesses, Gabriella, Nora, and Sofia, one day you will know that you sustained me through this process. To my parents (all four of them), who never stopped believing in me, it has brought me great joy to make you proud. To my professional colleagues (you know who you are), who kept pushing me when I had convinced myself that it was acceptable to not finish, I will never forget you. I wish to thank Dr. Barbara Strobert and Dr. Dena Seiss for volunteering to serve on the committee. You contributed pearls of wisdom on which the success of this study hinged. Last but not least, to my mentor, Dr. Colella, you have been like a second father to me. I could not have done this without your positivity and optimism.

I give the final glory to God; all things are possible through You.

## DEDICATION

“Quien ama y persevere vence la piedra mas dura.”

He who loves and perseveres can defeat the hardest stone

Cabillo de Aragón

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to all of our nation's youngsters in America's public schools, as well as to the Hispanic parents and children with whom I have worked, learned, laughed, and cried. Your faith and perseverance in the face of significant challenges has inspired me. May all your dreams come true.

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## Chapter I

### INTRODUCTION

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 mentions parental involvement more than one hundred times (Rogers, 2006). There are assertions within educational research that parental involvement is important and necessary for student success and linked to positive outcomes for schools (Chávez-Reyes, 2010; Smock & McCormick, 1995). It is also suggested that schools with well-designed parental involvement programs outperform other schools (Pena, 2000; Sheldon, 2003).

The aforementioned federal NCLB legislation, which was a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, ushered in more stringent parental involvement provisions. The law demonstrated a commitment by Congress to parental involvement and building meaningful school and family partnerships (Chávez-Reyes, 2010). Bouffard and Weiss (2008) come from a different angle when they write, “NCLB has been an important milestone. It started a revolution by institutionalizing the rights of parents from a legal standpoint” (p.17).

The genesis for this most recent government re-conceptualizing of parent involvement has been framed in a number of ways. A U.S. Department of Education report (2004) points to three keys in the evolution of government parental involvement policy: the numerous and diverse forms of parental involvement, increased fiscal demands on school systems, and increased emphasis on the success of all students.

Garcia (2001) lends a socio-cultural perspective in identifying three developments which are of “great concern to policymakers”: a growing number of students who are

arriving at school ill-prepared to learn, a growing number of non-native-born students entering the schools, and an increasing number of limited English proficient students. The NCLB legislation addresses the third trend by establishing “sub-groups” for which public schools must ensure increasing passing rates on standardized tests (Capps et al., 2004). One of these sub-groups is Limited English Proficient (LEP) students, for which Title III of NCLB is dedicated.

In the 2009-2010 fiscal year the United States federal government allocated almost a billion dollars to fund programs and services for limited English proficient students and their families; over nineteen million dollars of these funds were allocated to the state of New Jersey (US DOE, 2009). A 2003 Department of Education survey identified that two-thirds of all schools in the United States had limited English proficient students enrolled. Of these LEP students, almost 80% speak Spanish as their first language and are of Hispanic origin (Capps et al., 2004). It is projected that by the year 2020, more than 20% of all students in the United States will be Hispanic (Garcia, 2001); and by the year 2050, the overall Latino population in the United States will have tripled (Carger, 1997). The United States is currently the fourth largest Spanish-speaking country in the world (Smith, Stern, & Shatrova, 2008).

The continuing influx of Hispanic people and students has placed pressure and challenges on schools as well as on health and social services organizations to meet their needs and enable them to gain access to necessary information and services (Bailey, Skinner, Rodriguez, Gut, & Correa, 1999; Smith, Stern, & Shatrova, 2008). Over 27% of all Latinos live in poverty slightly higher than African Americans (US Census, 2011),

and children of immigrants and LEP students are representing an increasingly large percentage of low-income students (Capps et al., 2004).

In the educational context, it is evident that these challenges are not being managed effectively, as Hispanic students' academic achievement continues to lag behind other racial groups (Birch & Ferrin, 2002). Padron, Waxman, and Rivera (2003) express a severe viewpoint when they write, "The education of Hispanic students has reached a crisis stage" (p.27). The U.S. Department of Education lists the Hispanic dropout rate in 2009 at 17.6%, nearly twice that of Black students and over three times that of White students (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). Logically, districts with large numbers of LEP students often also demonstrate achievement gaps (James, 2003).

The need for policymakers and school leaders to prioritize closing this achievement gap is self-evident (Smith, Stern, & Shatrova, 2008; St. Clair & Jackson, 2006; Conchas, 2001). "The conditions of low minority achievement are both educational and a combination of social-economic-environmental issues. Together, they create a negative synergy....Our sense of urgency about implementing valid solutions stems from the bleak options for those students left behind" (House, 2005, p. 1).

In referring to the premise of parental involvement, Marschall (2008) proposes that the lack of cooperation between school, families, and communities may be in part to blame for this underachievement. Students at greater academic risk, such as those with limited English proficiency, may very well have more to gain from family involvement (Johnson & Viramontez, 2004). Establishing partnerships with what Geenen, Powers, and Lopez-Vazquez (2001) refer to as culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) families may present unique challenges, such as economic capital, differing cultural roles, and

perceptions regarding parental involvement in the educational process (Chávez-Reyes, 2010).

There has been much written about obstacles to the involvement of CLD parents, such as language barriers, limited educational background, cultural differences, and negative prior experiences with schools. In spite of these challenges, strengthening this cooperation and recognizing parents as a significant source of support for students holds promise vis a vis bridging the achievement gap (Driessen, Smit, & Slegers, 2005; Waterman & Henry, 2008). Chavez-Reyes (2010) suggests, however, that a philosophical shift must be made in order for more “inclusive, dynamic and interactional” school and family partnership to be established between ELLs, their families, schools, and society (p. 481). In part, the philosophical shift which Chavez-Reyes is suggesting is from pessimism to optimism, from defeatist to positivist.

For example, there are contentions that the vast majority of LEP students come from linguistically isolated households, in which there may be fewer resources to help them learn English (Epstein, 2005). This deficit perspective has wrongfully led to the perception that early literacy practices were virtually non-existent in Latino/Hispanic households.

Some research seems to indicate the contrary, that Hispanic mothers and fathers are, in fact, participatory in various ways (Ortiz, 2004). As Okagaki (2001) writes, “Even if parents cannot read, they help their children develop a love for books and stories...They can create a climate in which children are expected to study every day” (p. 19). This premise is tangent to the concept of self-efficacy, which essentially asserts that if parents feel that they are able to help their children in school and that their efforts make a

difference, they will be more likely to be involved and to “generate strategies to solve current problems, anticipate problem situations in which they might become productively involved and persist when faced with difficulties in solving problems” (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997, p. 51).

The end game is not merely parental participation but the empowerment of parents to be active in the educational process of their children (Chávez-Reyes, 2010). This will require a shift from traditional parental involvement to programs which seek to teach parents new skills and even child rearing practices (Carger, 1997; St. Clair & Jackson, 2006). Building this capacity among CLD parents, or all parents for that matter, represents the crux of empowering parents to become true educational partners.

One type of program in which this premise is particularly applicable and which has yielded benefits for students, parents, and schools are family literacy programs (St. Clair & Jackson, 2006). There are positive correlations between family involvement and children’s literacy (Dearing, Kreider, Simpkins, & Weiss, 2006). Logically, programs such as these might be particularly beneficial to parents of English Language Learners with limited English skills themselves (Espinosa, 1995; Ramirez, 2003; Sosa, 1997; Waterman & Harry, 2008).

In spite of ample support for equitable and expanded partnerships, student culture and native language tend to be seen as liabilities (Chávez-Reyes, 2010). The result is that parents of children who would benefit most from increased involvement tend to be marginalized (Hill & Taylor, 2004); in fact, Smith, Stern, and Shatrova (2008) report that Hispanic parental involvement may be decreasing.

## **Statement of the Problem**

Within the body of research there are numerous assertions identifying the dearth of studies, examining, for example, (1) the relationship between implementation of “targeted involvement activities and student outcomes” (Sheldon, 2003), (2) the “results of specific practices of partnership in various schools, at various grade levels, and for diverse populations of students, families and teachers” (Epstein, 1995), (3) “diverse aspects of home-school collaboration that may impact on children’s school performance” (Izzo, Weissberg, Kaspro, & Fendrich, 1999), and (4) more specifically, the inadequate investigation of the “connection between children developing literacy skills and parental involvement from diverse ethnic and cultural groups” (Ortiz, 2004, p. 168).

In the past, the primary settings in which non-White Hispanic persons resided were large urban centers, and the studies which have been conducted with this population tended to occur in urban centers and/or in geographic locations with large per capita populations of Hispanic people. However, the 2000 census revealed a trend of growing Hispanic populations in non-metropolitan areas (Smith, Stern, & Shatrova, 2008). Since then, an increasing number of studies have been conducted with rural or migrant populations; very few studies, however, have been identified which study the Hispanic parent population within suburban settings. A growing Hispanic population coupled with the NCLB legislation has created an increased sense of urgency as to how to help these students and their families.

The district about which this case study was written has a population of approximately 70 LEP students who are, by and large, exceeding benchmarks on the state test for English Language Learners but not progressing according to the NCLB

benchmarks on the state standardized Mathematics, Language Arts, and Science assessments. This is not an uncommon problem within the state of New Jersey; in fact, most schools had not been making Annual Yearly Progress for their LEP students.

For the last four years the school district had operated a summer program for its English Language Learners (ELLs) in grades K-8 which functioned as a form of extended school year program. Prior to the summer of 2011 this program did not offer a complimentary parental-involvement component. However, inconsistent Hispanic parental involvement, as well as a persistent achievement gap on state standardized tests by the district's ELLs, motivated the district to imagine a parental training program which could theoretically have a positive impact on both. In the summer of 2011, the district implemented, for the first time, its ELL Summer Parent Institute, which became the basis for this study.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The study used Joyce Epstein's parental involvement typology and corresponding "theory of overlapping spheres of influence" as a conceptual framework, which purports that meaningful parental involvement occurs when school, home, and community are working together. Additionally, Epstein's typology of parental involvement represents a foundation of this study, as it identifies six types of involvement around which comprehensive school, family, and community partnerships can be developed: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community.

Type 1, parenting, focuses on parenting skills, such as creating home conditions which support learning, and assists schools in understanding family background and



culture. Type 2, communicating, involves creating two-way communication channels. Type 3, volunteering, includes recruitment and training for parents in order for them to participate as volunteers or observers both in-school and out-of-school settings. Type 4, learning at home, involves families in academic activities in the home; goal-setting and homework is designed to facilitate and/or necessitate collaborative work between parents and their children. Type 5, decision-making, includes families in the decision-making process of the school through service in parent organizations or on advisory councils. Type 6, collaborating with the community, involves coordinating cultural and civic resources for families (Epstein, 2004).

Types 2, 3, 5, and 6 (communicating, volunteering, decision-making, and collaborating with the community) are the characteristics or objectives of a robust collaborative home, school, and community partnership. Moreover, implied within them is a two-way accountability for both home and school. Types 1 and 4 (parenting and learning at home) are related, by and large, to parents and are the means by which a parent may become more adept at communicating, more likely to volunteer, and more able strategically to connect academic support in the home to the curricular “goings-on” within the classroom and school.

Some would assert that Epstein’s model represents a parental involvement framework which is most applicable to and feasible in communities with the social, economic, and cultural capital to support it. Perhaps one could assert that Epstein’s parental involvement typology is reflective of or modeled after the pre-existing milieu of racially homogeneous, upper socioeconomic school districts and the relationship therein between school, home, and community. The foundation of Joyce Epstein’s framework is

in essence a “surplus” perspective, insofar as schools, parents, and the community have an abundance of resources and knowledge which need only be shared and leveraged more effectively and collaboratively.

To what end, however, should these outcomes be pursued: to raise the four-year college acceptance rate to 100%, to increase the number of students admitted to Ivy League universities, or to raise the mean SAT score by  $x$  number of points? This is not to say that these are not important goals and important to their constituencies. However, it is easy to argue that decreasing the high school dropout rate represents a more urgent priority. Ironically, the communities in which the students and parents might have the most to gain from robust collaborative parent involvement programs are often devoid of them. What these communities may lack in material resources, however, they hold, arguably in equal measure, a parent’s love for one’s children and the desire to see them succeed and prosper.

The stumbling blocks which schools have encountered in the process of building such collaborative relationships with culturally and linguistically diverse families include cultural misconceptions regarding parental values relative to education and parental involvement. There is ample literature and research to suggest that collaborative parental involvement can have a positive impact on student achievement. Collaborative parental involvement programs can be forged with culturally and linguistically diverse parents not only to their benefit but also for their children.

The parental training program, which was the focus of this case study, sought to develop participating parents’ capacities in Types 1 and 4 (parenting and learning at home), to understand parental perspectives, and to establish the foundation of a

collaborative relationship. Epstein's framework represents a central core around which the parent program was designed as well as around which the guiding questions of the study were molded and analyzed. Finally, the program and the case study which was devised after the program was completed sought to explore and even test the theory of "overlapping spheres of influence."

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore Hispanic parents' learning goals/motivations for participating in a summer parenting institute, their aspirations for their children, viewpoints on parental involvement, and perceptions of useful/constructive elements of the program itself. Data that existed and which was collected over the course of the recruitment, planning and administration of the summer parent institute was analyzed for this research.

### **Guiding Questions**

The following were the guiding questions of the study:

1. How do Hispanic parents describe their learning goals for participation in the summer institute?
2. How do Hispanic parents perceive their roles and responsibilities in their children's education?
3. How do Hispanic parents describe their future aspirations and dreams for their children?
4. How do Hispanic parents perceive the summer parenting institute to be useful and constructive?

## **Methodology**

A case study methodology was selected for use in this study, as it sought to as Yin writes, “contribute to our knowledge of individual, group, organizational, social, political, and relational phenomena” (2009, p. 4). Moreover, case study inquiry was chosen, as the situation was “technically distinctive in that there were more variables than data points, multiple sources of evidence and prior development of theoretical propositions” (Yin, 2009, p. 20).

The unit of analysis of this case study was a group of suburban Hispanic parents who had participated in a collaborative parenting institute. A single case study was used, based upon a two-fold rationale as outlined by Yin. First, this study represented a critical case in testing a well-developed theory: Epstein’s theory of “overlapping spheres of influence.” The second rationale for a single case, according to Yin, is that the case represented a unique case, which from this researcher’s perspective after review of the literature would assert it was.

There are myriad typologies of case studies which speak to the idiosyncratic or contextual uniqueness of every case study. The difficulty in putting case studies into the “box” of a typology is evident. Therefore, more often than not, a case study can fall into several categories, which this case study clearly did. For example, according to Yin, this case study might be characterized as “holistic-descriptive,” as it answers “how” and “why” questions, examines contemporary events, the relevant behaviors of which cannot be manipulated, and because of its ability to deal with a wide variety of evidence (2009, p. 11). Stake (2005) might define it as an intrinsic case study, insofar as it was undertaken because of a specific or intrinsic interest in a particular individual or group or phenomena

(Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p 445). Borg and Gall might classify it as an observational case study in that it is focused on an organization--or on some part of an organization—and on participant observation as a major data collection tool (1989, p. 403). In the end, it is most appropriately classified as an instrumental case study, as it was conducted to provide an insight into an issue or redraw a generalization.

The proposition of this study was that when Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres of influence and parental involvement typology was applied to the creation, implementation, and evaluation of a parental training program, CLD parents will attend regularly, will be engaged, and will perceive the learning opportunity as positive and useful. The unit of analysis for this case study was a group of Hispanic parents in a suburban school district who had participated in a six-week parental training institute.

### **Design**

In addressing the study's guiding questions, a variety of data sources were analyzed which were quantitative, qualitative, archival, and observatory. The qualitative data were drawn primarily from responses to open-ended survey questions, a closure roundtable discussion during the last class session, class activities, observations, and field notes. The quantitative data was drawn from discrete item survey questions.

To facilitate the analysis of the data, where possible, this researcher grouped data sources together in order to triangulate multiple perspectives or, as Stake (2005) writes in his explanation of triangulation, "clarify meaning by identifying different ways the case is being seen" (p. 454). In referring to Table 1, for example, for Guiding Question 1, parental learning goals were culled from three distinct sources, a closed-item paper and pencil survey which was distributed prior to the commencement of the class to help

design the curriculum of the course, a roundtable classroom discussion held on the first night of the institute, and a collaborative classroom activity in which parents worked with a partner to brainstorm questions they had about education, the school district, and their municipality. Similar approaches were taken for the other research questions, except that for the third research question the corresponding data were extracted from only one source, a reflective writing assignment.

Table 1

*Guiding Questions and Data Sources*

Guiding Questions	Data Sources
How do Hispanic parents describe their learning goals for participation in the summer institute?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning Interest Survey</li> <li>• Class Discussion</li> <li>• Collaborative Classroom Activity</li> </ul>
How do Hispanic parents perceive their roles and responsibilities in their children's education?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classroom Activity</li> <li>• Class Evaluation Questions</li> </ul>
How do Hispanic parents describe their future aspirations and dreams for their children?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflective Writing Assignment</li> </ul>
How do Hispanic parents perceive the summer parenting institute to be valuable and constructive?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class Evaluations</li> <li>• Mid-course Evaluation Form</li> <li>• Field Notes</li> <li>• Observer Notes of a Closure Roundtable Discussion</li> </ul>

The case study report was presented in a standard linear analytic structure following a question and answer format. The goal or technique for the data analysis was explanation building; causal links may, as Yin wrote, “reflect critical insights into public policy process or social science theory” (2009, p. 141).

The questions of the validity and reliability of the study have been addressed through the methodological design. Yin cites four tests which can determine the quality of social research: construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability. The issue of construct validity is commonly addressed through the use of multiple forms or sources of data; thus, the design of this study incorporated the use of varied and different sources of data.

The internal validity of a study is the degree of accuracy or reliability of the inferences made by the researcher in the explanation of causal links. Case study tactics which can be employed to address internal validity are explanation building and pattern matching, both of which this study’s design employed.

The external validity of a study requires a definition of the domain to which the findings of the study can be applied. The use of theory in single case studies, according to Yin, can be a case study tactic to address external validity; thus, this study used Epstein’s theory of “overlapping spheres of influence.”

The final test of reliability addresses the degree to which, if another researcher were to follow the same procedures and conducted the same case study, he would arrive at the same findings and conclusions. Again, Yin cites using case study protocol as a tactic to address this; thus, the design of this study employed this protocol.

## **Limitations and Delimitations**

The following limitations existed in this study:

1. The research design employed an instrumental single-case study methodology analyzing perceptive data only from surveys, reflective class assignments, field notes, and class observations originally collected for the school district's use. The data merely reflected the feelings of individuals and this researcher's observations and thus may not be generalizable to other persons or settings.
2. The researcher is employed as a central office administrator in the school district in which the study was conducted. Considering the inherent authority dynamic, this might have presented some limitations regarding the reliability of the participants' responses or their willingness to speak with candor.

The following delimitations existed in this study:

1. No attempt was made to demonstrate empirically the program's effectiveness on student academic outcomes. The study was limited to field observations and parental perceptions extracted from information originally collected for the district's use.
2. The study relied on evidence from parents only; students and staff were not involved.
3. The study involved only the parents of English Language Learners in one public school district of a GH DFG, who participated and/or registered in the district's "ELL Summer Parent Institute"; therefore findings may not be applicable to other school environments.



4. The study examined the “ELL Summer Parent Institute” in its first year and parental perceptions only during the program administration. Additional time to revisit outcomes with parents and/or to get an additional year of data would have been helpful.

### **Significance of the Study**

As previously stated, the increasing number of students in American public schools of Hispanic descent and for whom English is a second language, coupled with the mandates created by the NCLB legislation, has established the need for effective academic intervention strategies. The research indicates that when parents are actively involved in their children’s education, students’ achievement tends to improve. The calls to move to a more inclusive definition of parent involvement have also been heard. Moreover, the identification, through scholarly research, of parental involvement methods and techniques which both foster parent trust and lead to greater collaborative involvement and the sharing of these findings with education practitioners will only lead to more effective program development and implementation (Fradd, 1992).

This study has significance not only for the host school district; but also for similar school districts in the neighboring area and beyond, in that it provides insight into the perspective of Hispanic parents of ELLs regarding their parenting and parental involvement practices. The findings from this study have certainly assisted the host school district in the evaluation and modification of this program. Moreover, it could also provide insights insofar as how to budget and allocate district or state and federal funds. In the overall body of research, the study added additional credence and legitimacy to the premise of parental training programs for culturally and linguistically diverse families.

Yin, writes that “an exemplary case study is likely to be one in which the individual case or cases are unusual and of public interest, [and] the underlying issues are nationally important-either in theoretical terms or in policy or practical terms” (2009, p. 185).

### **Outline of the Study**

Chapter II presents a review of the literature regarding topics relevant to this study. Chapter III describes the methodology of the study, including the setting, program and research design, participants, instrumentation, data collections, and data analysis. Chapter IV reports the study results. Chapter V analyzes the findings and discusses the conclusions, including the policy and practical implications of the study, as well as suggestions for future and additional research.

### **Summary**

In the face of ongoing challenges in serving the educational needs of English Language Learners, the district designed and ran a summer parent institute and embarked on a venture of collaborative involvement with a group of the district’s Hispanic parents. This study sought to explore parental perspectives through further examination and analysis of the data collected during the planning and administration of the program to add to the literature and research base on collaborative parental involvement programs with Hispanic families. More specifically, it sought to shed light on parents’ motivations for enrolling in the program, their perspectives on their role in their children’s education, their aspirations for their children’s future, and what they found most constructive and positive about the program.

The study employed an instrumental single-case study design, the findings of which were presented in a linear, question and answer format. Triangulation of perspectives

expressed in various data sources were conducted, where possible, for the purpose of data analysis. The study has not only practical significance for program designers but also philosophical significance as to the prudence, feasibility, and value of implementing collaborative parental involvement programs with culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse families.

### **Definition of Terms**

***English Language Learners (ELLs):*** Sometimes referred to as LEP (limited English proficient students) or ESL (English as a Second Language students), English Language Learners are students for whom English is not their first or home language. NCLB defines ELLs as any student who is currently enrolled in an English Language Services program or has exited such a program within two years.

***Hispanic:*** Hispanics or Latinos are people who classify themselves in one of the specific Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino categories (Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano, Puerto Rican, or Cuban) as well as those who indicate that they are "other Spanish/Hispanic/Latino." Persons who indicate that they are "other Spanish/Hispanic/Latino" include those whose origins are Spain, the Spanish-speaking countries of Central or South America, the Dominican Republic, or people identifying themselves generally as Spanish, Spanish-American, Hispanic, Hispano, Latino, and so on (United States Census, 2000).

***Family Literacy Program:*** Educational programs geared toward parents, in particular culturally and linguistically diverse families, which enable them to acquire English proficiency as well as access to the socio-cultural knowledge necessary for them to

assume greater roles of involvement in their children's education (Garcia & Hasson, 2004)

***Parental Involvement:*** The framework, as proposed by Joyce Epstein (1995), which asserts that students learn more when the overlapping spheres of home, school, and community are sharing responsibility and collaborating.

***Title III:*** Title III of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 provides federal financial support to state and local educational agencies to supplement English language instruction in order to ensure that all English Language Learners, including immigrant children and youths, attain English proficiency and develop high levels of academic language proficiency in English.

***Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD):*** A term used to describe students and/or families residing within the United States for whom English is not the native tongue and who have a different home culture and/or country of origin than the United States.

## Chapter II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The following chapter provides a review of research and literature in the following areas: the history of parental involvement, frameworks and definitions of parental involvement, common barriers to parental involvement, characteristics of Hispanic parents relating to schooling and involvement, the relationship between parental involvement and student outcomes, and practices for collaborative school-home partnerships including family literacy programs. These subcategories provide a broad backdrop to the topic of parental involvement and the Hispanic ethnic group, impediments to parental involvement practices, and programs which have positively impacted student outcomes, as well as parental self-efficacy and involvement.

However, the sections of Chapter II which relate to Hispanic parents and parental involvement programs are most directly related to the study's research questions. Chapter II takes some liberties in terms of the inclusion of categories, in particular, the sections on the history of parent involvement, parent involvement and student outcomes, and definitions of parent involvement in that the research questions are not directly related to these topics; however, they are certainly tangential. Moreover, this researcher constructed the literature review to accomplish what Boote and Beile refer to as setting, the "broad context" of the study (2008, p. 4) and under the assumption that the reader was relatively uninformed about parental involvement theory and practice.

#### **History of Parental Involvement**

The following section provides a socio-political orientation to parental involvement in the United States from the turn of the twentieth century to the present. It

highlights key legislative watersheds such as the Civil Rights Act, ESEA, and NCLB as to their impact on the educational process for minority and/or disadvantaged student groups.

Since the inception of formalized schooling, families and schools have worked together (Hill & Taylor, 2004). The roles of families and schools were initially distinct, with schools responsible for academic topics and families instructing youngsters in the areas of morality, culture, and religion (Fan, 2001). One of the first legislative events to impact the nature of roles within education was the enacting of compulsory schooling laws which shifted a greater degree of responsibility onto state and local school districts (Smock & McCormick, 1995). Contemporaneously, parent interest, as evidenced by membership in PTA organizations, grew from 60,000 in 1915 to 1.5 million in 1930 (Berger, 2004).

This broader representation in public education arguably led to advocacy for greater equality from 1930 to 1965 with regard to testing, funding, segregation, and language policies (San Miguel Jr., G., 2003). Parental involvement represented a common thread from the beginning of this era. At the 1930 White House Conference on Child Health and Protection, 4000 specialists recommended the exploration of opportunities and obligations for parent involvement to state departments of education.

In 1959 the White House conference would meet for its Golden Anniversary, ushering in the contemporary period of education with greater focus on social change as well as on problems and prospects for remediation. In 1964, the Civil Rights Act and in 1965 the Elementary and Secondary Education ACT (ESEA) were passed, bringing about an emphasis on equal opportunities in public education, as well as the influx of federal

monies and grants, such as Title I. It was at this time that factors such as family background and parental educational level came to the forefront as influencing student achievement (Berger, 2004).

The premises of cultural deprivation or cultural deficits were presented as inherent learning deficiencies for such minority groups as African-Americans and Latinos (Montero-Sieburth & Batt, 2001). Consequently, schools became more responsive to the cultural, linguistic, and academic needs of Latino students (San Miguel Jr., 2003). As efforts to service diverse students within schools accelerated, over the course of the decades of the 1960s and 1970s the push for increased parental involvement likewise increased in the name of equity and social justice.

The Plowden Report, which was published in 1967, stressed the importance of the home-school collaborative, and in its wake the PTA movement continued to gain momentum (Dimock, O'Donaghue, & Robb, 1996). Congress and the White House persisted, "to strengthen and give more value to the role of parents and the community as the political entity responsible for holding schools accountable" (Fege, 2006, p. 575). The passing of new federal initiatives and accountability measures led to a renewed interest and commitment on the part of school districts to address parental involvement (Sosa, 1997).

As schools began to learn more about their diverse families and what they had to offer as far as "funds of knowledge," the cultural deficit model began to give way to the cultural differences model which emphasized that minority students did not lack cultural stimuli but rather brought their own linguistic codes and values. "The research became

caught in a cultural/social tug-of-war between home and school expectations” (Montero-Sieburth, 2001, p. 337).

As the schools entered the 1980s, the term *at risk* was coined in referring to, among other groups, Latino students whose achievement was lagging behind that of their classmates (Valencia & Black, 2002). School programs focused on closing these achievement gaps, and new forms of parental and family involvement programs were realized (San Miguel Jr., 2003). Feuerstein provides a rare negative implication of this shared site-based decision making in that the shifting of power from district offices to specific schools led to disparities in the capacity and manner in which these local councils functioned. “In some districts, school councils voted on the use of school resources and assisted in the development of long-range plans, whereas in other districts they served solely in an advisory capacity” (2000, p. 30).

If the 1960s and 1970s were decades during which civil rights and family programs expanded, the 1980s can be viewed as a period of retrenchment (Berger, 2004). Conversely, the 1990s were recognized as the “family friendly decade” in which family partnerships with schools were encouraged. In 1990 the Center on Children, Schools, Families, and Children’s Learning was established, and the federal government established common standards through Goals 2000, which set family partnerships as a voluntary national goal for all schools (Berger, 2004; Epstein, 1995).

Still, not all groups enjoyed a renewed commitment and openness to their involvement; in 1994 Proposition 187 was passed by voters in California, essentially denying public schooling and medical services to undocumented immigrant women and children. Although the legislation would be later ruled unconstitutional by the California



courts, it sent a clear and devastating message to Latino families (Villenas & Deyhle, 1999).

Eight years after Proposition 187, on January, 8, 2002, Congress would sign the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 into law, bringing sweeping reforms to the ESEA, taking perhaps the most dramatic steps since the Civil Rights Act to ensure equity of educational services for all students (Berger, 2004; Capps et al, 2004; James, 2003). In addition to tracking student achievement on standardized tests, the act transformed what had been family partnerships as a voluntary national goal to a legal mandate and “in effect [activated] the theory of overlapping spheres of influence, which posits that students learn better when the home, school, and community share responsibilities for their success” (Epstein, 2005, p. 179). For example, the legislation required parent-school compacts, the inclusion of parents in the decision-making structures for Title I budgeting and programs and the development of parental capacity to engage in these processes (Rogers, 2006).

However, years after its enactment, school-parent partnerships continue to be, by and large, more rhetorical and theoretical than meaningful and practical, as well as being narrowly conceived (Rogers, 2006; Fege, 2004). There are numerous explanations proposed for this persistent delineation between home and school, informal and formal schooling, but perhaps at its base, it is that as a society “we believe that a world of difference exists between teaching a child to hold a spoon and teaching that same child to hold a pencil” (Rosenthal & Sawyers, 1996). In spite of this societal recalcitrance, Fege remains optimistic in his recommendations for the next reauthorization of the ESEA, in that it must acknowledge that schools which are responsive to the needs of parents and

families can play a vital role in raising student achievement and that community members and resources must be engaged and leveraged to assist in these efforts (2006).

This responsiveness will need to acknowledge and support the role of parents as educators (St. Clair & Jackson, 2006), which capitalizes on “the advances in research and practice that demonstrates that family involvement...is most effective and authentic when it is intentionally ‘linked to learning’” (Bouffard & Weiss, 2008, p. 2).

### **Definitions of Parental Involvement**

The successive section describes the various conceptions and/or definitions of parental involvement as outlined in the literature. Different typologies/frameworks of parental involvement and educational programs are outlined in order to identify best practices in school and family partnerships.

There are myriad conceptualizations of parental involvement in the literature, encompassing activities which fall into the categories of home, school, school governance, and school choice (Smock & McCormick, 1995). Valencia and Black (2002) use dyadic categories of external and internal involvement with schools, the former being those activities which occur in the school such as school visits, and the latter being home-based activities such as homework support. Feuerstein (2000) cites Dimock, O’Donogue, and Robb’s five categories of parent involvement: school choice, decision-making through school based councils, teaching and learning, effect on the physical and material environment and communication. Perhaps the most prevalent framework, however, is that of Joyce Epstein, which identifies six types of involvement which work toward the establishment of a comprehensive program: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making and collaborating with the community (1995).

Chávez-Reyes (2010) refers to this as a “multi-level home-school model,” which moves beyond a “two-directional parent-school model” in that it promotes information sharing between school and parents, directly invites parents to participate, and empowers parents to make decisions about their children’s schools and education (p. 480). Bouffard and Weiss (2008) likewise cite the need for mutual responsibility between families, schools, and communities as an essential component of effective family involvement policies and practices but add that family involvement occurs in all contexts in which youth live and learn and thus must be part of a larger complimentary learning approach.

Lopez, Scribner, and Mahitivanichcha (2001) highlight Williams and Chavkin’s seven criteria or elements of promising parental involvement programs, including sufficient resources, ongoing training, procedures for continuous evaluation, and written policies addressing parental involvement. While there may be semantic differences, the underlying premise of modern parental involvement is the empowerment of parents and the sharing of responsibility between school and home.

Smock and McCormick (1995) suggest that the variety and abundance of definitions of parental involvement in educational literature are a testament to its perceived importance, as well as a number of positive outcomes which are believed to be associated with it. However, there is no “boiler-plate” approach to the enhancement of parental involvement (Peña, 2000). In fact, effective parental programs may look different at each site; indeed, “schools [may] tailor their practices to meet the needs and interests, time and talents, ages and grade levels of students and their families” (Epstein, 1995, p.6). In effect, the implication is that schools must understand the contexts and environment of the communities they support.

It is on this foundation that Epstein built her external model of overlapping spheres of influence, which recognizes that the three contexts in which students operate--home; school, and community--can be drawn together or pushed apart. Driessen, Smit and Slegers (2005), articulate the essence of this theory when they write, "Epstein sees...the congruence between the different spheres of influence...to be of considerable importance for the optimal development of children, and [the] partnership is viewed as a means to realize this" (p. 511).

Lopez, Scribner, and Mahitivanichcha's (2001) study of schools serving migrant students and families found that schools which were able to build effective parental involvement programs demonstrated effective internal collaboration as well as external collaboration and an "unwavering commitment to meet the multiple needs of migrant families" (p. 261). Parent needs may be for social, health, or educational services. Parent educational programs can serve two purposes: general awareness or self-improvement aimed at building on the social and educational capital within households which may promote student success (Lopez, Scribner, and Mahitivanichcha, 2001). Hill and Taylor (2004) refer to mechanisms by which involvement contributes to student achievement in that parents build skills and expertise, or "social capital," which enhances their sense of effectiveness for assisting their children, and increased involvement fosters relationships with staff through which information is acquired and obtained.

Social capital, a term developed by Coleman (1988) refers to both emotional support through which families derive resources through their relationships with kin and educational guidance in what Azmitia, Cooper, and Brown (2009) describe as "enactment of educational practices and ways of connecting with schools or other settings outside the

home” (p. 147). Parental involvement or training programs can play a key role in helping amass the latter.

### **Parental Involvement and Student Outcomes**

Although this study does not seek to establish an empirical relationship between the family training program and student outcomes, this researcher felt it was worthwhile to briefly review the research regarding parental involvement and positive schooling outcomes, including impact on parental behaviors and characteristics, which in turn have led to higher rates of student achievement.

Marschall (2006) cites that over the last twenty years research on parental involvement has increased considerably and thus so has the accompanying body of evidence linking it with a variety of educational outcomes. Sanders (1999) points to the establishment and enrollment of 202 schools in the National Network of Partnership Schools and growth in membership to over 800 schools by the 1998-99 school year as a resounding testament to the increasing awareness of the importance of forging home, school, and community partnerships and the search for guidance and resources for doing so. Theorists and practitioners alike generally agree that programs aimed at increasing parental involvement must correlate into improved student achievement (James, 2003). Logically, family and community involvement which is connected to student learning has a greater impact on student achievement than more general forms of involvement (Allen, 2007).

Epstein (1995) tempers this when referring to the “widespread misperception” that any practice to involve parents will result in improved student achievement (p. 7). Henderson and Mapps’s meta-analysis of 51 research studies (2002) found a positive

relationship between student achievement and the existence of real partnerships between schools and families. For example, Sheldon (2003) found positive linkages between student performance on Maryland's state mandated test (MSPAP) and schools efforts to meet the challenges of family and community involvement. St. Clair and Jackson (2006), in their study in a rural Midwestern elementary school, found that equipping migrant families with new skills to assist their children in the development of language skills led to positive language outcomes for their children. Izzo, Weissberg, Kasprow, and Fendrich's study of urban elementary school teachers' perceptions of parental involvement and school performance (1999) found that it was participation in educational activities at home which was the greatest predictor of student academic achievement.

Other studies have found that parents' educational aspirations for their children, above and beyond such factors as socio-economic status, had a direct effect on students' initial learning as well as their growth in academic achievement (Fan, 2001; Hong & Ho, 2005). Pena (2000) asserts that when low-income parents are trained to work with their children, they develop more positive attitudes and become more active in their children's schooling and learning. Head Start, the nation's largest intervention program for at-risk children, supports this claim and emphasizes the importance of parental involvement on early academic development by promoting positive experiences and developing parents' own development and skills (Hill & Taylor, 2004). As Allen (2007) writes, "Families of all cultural backgrounds, education, and income levels can, and often do, have a positive influence on their children's learning" (p. 7).

### **Parental Involvement: Barriers and Obstacles**

The literature reveals that there are myriad factors which may impede and prevent parents from becoming more involved in school affairs and the educational process of their children. The following section of Chapter II outlines and describes some of the major factors such as race, socioeconomic status, educational attainment status, and linguistic and cultural differences.

The growing diversity of the population of the United States has created a need to develop mechanisms for serving the educational and social needs of all citizens in order to enable them to be productive members of society (Gopaul-McNicol & Thomas-Presswood, 1998). Public schools often represent the nexus of these needs and thus remain a common context in which these services may be provided to youngsters and their families alike. As Hill and Taylor (2004) point out, however, the home and school relationships do not exist in isolation but within specific community and cultural contexts. Garcia (2001) established three categories of factors which can impact a child's and family's ability to meet with success in school: personal, environmental, and school or learning specific.

Unfortunately, parent involvement efforts vary greatly and tend to limit meaningful collaboration and ignore culturally specific perspectives (Lopez, Scribner, & Mahitivanichcha, 2001). It is far more common for schools to place one individual in charge of parental involvement, as opposed to the formation of a multidimensional stakeholder team (Epstein, 2005). The institutional or bureaucratic reluctance in this regard may be rooted in a number of factors. Lopez, Scribner, & Mahitivanichcha (2001) assert that it can be attributed to previous failed attempts to do so, or a bias that

professional matters are under the purview of school personnel. Regardless, there are a number of fundamental changes in approach which must occur if schools are going to create a successful parental involvement program.

Some groups of parents may be less likely to be involved or to comply with parental involvement policies than others due to a variety of factors. Lareau and Shumer (1996) assert that this varying involvement is due to long-standing differences in social resources such as educational skills, economic resources, and social networks. As Fege (2006) writes, “There are some parents and communities that are much more adept at using...civic highways than others” (p. 572). Regardless, theorists like Sosa (1997) suggest that schools must acknowledge that there are factors that detract from parent involvement, determine what they are, and commit staff and resources to mitigate these factors and forces. Nevertheless, while there is a growing body of literature examining the relationship between school level factors and student achievement, there has been substantially less investigation into the relationship between school environment and parental involvement, which Fradd (1992) organizes into staff, student, and school characteristics.

In their efforts to increase parental involvement of culturally and linguistically diverse parents, schools must be careful to not make parents feel as if they are being coerced into participation (Barnard, 2004). Often attitudinal barriers are the primary obstacle to parents becoming more involved, which may involve role anxiety, communication problems, or disagreement with education policies (Sosa, 1997). Negative perceptions of schools or the educational system often stem from parents’ own unfavorable past schooling experiences (Chavkin & Gonzalez, 1995; Hoover-Dempsey &



Sandler, 1997; Pena, 2000; Thorp, 1997). Past experiences with school are merely one aspect of family background, however, which have been shown to relate significantly to schooling outcomes (Feuerstein, 2000). Another demographic variable which has been identified as impacting the level of involvement is educational background (Pena, 2000).

Chavéz-Reyes (2010) cites Sy, Rowley, and Schulenberg's use of the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten Cohort, which found that parent education was a strong predictor of parental involvement. Azmitia, Cooper and Brown cite Coleman's assertion that "'parents' education [level] is a...mechanism for reproducing families' social class status from generation to generation" (p. 147). Moreover, schools servicing large populations of LEP students must account for language barriers as well as for parents with limited or no formal schooling (Capps et al., 2004). In spite of this evidence, schools tend to not consider differing educational skill in their formulation and implementation of parental involvement strategies (Lareau & Shumer, 1996).

Tangent to educational background is socioeconomic status, which has been shown to have a relationship with levels of parental involvement. In general, parents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are less involved (Hill & Taylor, 2004) and experience less positive involvement than parents from more affluent communities (Epstein, 1995). This has much to do with a greater number of barriers facing these parents, including lack of transportation and child care burdens (Garcia & Hasson, 2004; Lareau & Shumar, 1996). Okpala, Okpala, and Smith (2001) in their study of fourth grade mathematics achievement in a low-income North Carolina county found a strong and negative relationship between family socioeconomic status and student achievement.

In addition to educational and economic differences, cultural differences can be an additional source of alienation (Izzo et al., 1999). In his longitudinal study of parental involvement on student's academic achievement in the high school years, Fan (2001) concluded that "because ethnicity and SES are related, observed differences in parental involvement among certain ethnic and racial groups may partially be due to SES" (p. 31). Feuerstein (2000) references Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital, which posits that schools represent and reproduce middle or upper class values and forms of communications, which puts parents of different cultural backgrounds at a disadvantage as they must adapt to the dominant culture. Bailey, Skinner, Rodriguez, Gut, and Correa (1999) reiterate this theory more than twenty years later, when they write, "In addition to the usual challenges inherent in learning about something with which one has little experience or knowledge, parents in many ethnic groups may experience difficulty due to language barriers and lack of familiarity with cultural expectations for appropriate help-seeking behaviors" (p. 368).

Language also has been shown to impact the type of involvement activities in which parents participate (Peña, 2000). GoPaul-McNicol and Thomas-Presswood label a lack of language skills as a "stressor" which creates dependency on relatives and increases alienation from the host culture (1998). This alienation, while often associated with language skills, can also stem from immigrants' concern over their "undocumented status" and an avoidance of formal institutions (Waterman & Harry, 2008). This can go as far as choosing not to report being victims of crimes for fear of reprisals by immigration authorities (Gopaul-McNicol & Thomas-Presswood, 1998). "Schools stand in an optimal position to aid families in acquiring this needed information and expertise.

Schools have more resources, authority, and social capital to enact in bridging home and school” (Chávez-Reyes, 2010).

One of Henderson and Mapp’s critical conclusions, as cited by Allen (2007), was that parental involvement programs which are effective in engaging diverse families acknowledge socioeconomic and cultural difference and build upon strengths. Driessen, Smit, and Slegers study of over 500 Dutch primary schools found that schools with high percentages of ethnic minority students devoted a significant amount of time to parental involvement activities and considered them to be quite important, though no direct effect of these activities on student achievement was found (2005). Conversely, Thorp (1997) purports that too often families from culturally and linguistically diverse families are viewed from a “deficit” model, the implicit message being that they need to be educated about how to educate and help their children as opposed to acknowledging what they may be able to contribute.

In her review of school districts with successful practices for involving Hispanic parents, Sosa (1997) found that successful parental involvement programs overcame a major attitudinal barrier of moving from a deficit posture to one of empowerment and collaboration. The undergirding premise or belief of this empowerment is that all parents have skills, experience, or “funds of knowledge” to contribute and that they are willing and able to collaborate (Allen, 2007; Chávez-Reyes, 2010).

Chavkin and Gonzalez (1995) state that schools must acknowledge that parents are the first teachers of their children. In regard to Hispanic families, Allen (2007) refers to the need for “confianza” or trust between families and schools and the understanding that the relationship is reciprocal. Thorp (1997) purports that trust is built and maintained

within the context of an ongoing relationship and conversation that occurs over time. Equally important in building trust with culturally and linguistically diverse families is that the communication is non-judgmental. In her description of effective teacher-parent relationships, Espinosa (1995) writes, "In order to gain the trust and confidence of Hispanic parents, teachers must avoid making them feel they are to blame or are doing something wrong" (p. 4). Sosa (1997) concurs with this in his prescriptions regarding effective programs for low-income Hispanic families; that is, they should move away from burdening parents with what they should do but rather equip them with the tools and resources they need to assist their children on their own. One additional circumstance which is suggested to make families feel more welcome is that fellow members of their community are present at the meetings and are treated as valuable resources (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997).

### **Hispanic Parents**

As discussed in the previous section, language and culture can have a significant impact on parents' conceptions and perceptions of parental involvement. The following section reviews the literature and research on the Hispanic ethnic group insofar as their perspective on roles of parents in the education process. Its overall purpose is not only to inform the reader with regard to Hispanic parents, but also to provide a context by which the findings of this study will be compared and contrasted.

The singular term *Hispanic* belies the vast cultural diversity of this ethnic group. This diversity may present itself in the form of socioeconomic, educational attainment and literacy, and immigration status and contributes to the difficulty in developing strategies to facilitate meaningful parental involvement and partnerships with and by

schools (Smith, Stern, & Shatrova, 2008). In fact, two thirds of current Hispanic parents were either born here or arrived here at a young age and may have in fact dropped out of the American school system (Nicolau & Ramos, 1990). Therefore, educators working collaboratively with Hispanic parents, in order to impact their parenting, communication practices, and orientation, must develop a more profound understanding of the features of Hispanic parents' culture (Espinosa, 1995).

Sosa suggests that an overarching key to success in building involvement with Hispanic parents is when schools seek their contributions and offer meetings which meet the parents' needs; eventually, the needs the school wishes to address will emerge (1997). Quiocho and Daoud (2006) posit customization of programs to specific families and communities as the key to Latino parent involvement. In order to do this, barriers inhibiting Hispanic parents from participating must be addressed and solutions found. Smith, Stern, and Shatrova's study, which used qualitative interviews and focus groups with 15 Hispanic parents with limited English proficiency from a rural Midwestern school district, found that barriers to involvement included failure to send correspondence in Spanish, the parents' inability to speak and understand English to communicate with the school, and the reluctance of parents to question authority or advocate for the rights of their children (2008). The use of qualitative methodology was constructive, as it afforded the researchers insights into the feelings and perspectives of the participants. In the end, however, the absence of a learning context and relationship with the participants may have lessened the reliability and value of the findings.

Tapia's (1998) work with impoverished Puerto Rican families in Philadelphia found that economic stability and family composition were the most influential factors on

parental participation and corroborated that involvement initiatives with disadvantaged CLD families must address economic conditions of households, but also that poor Puerto Rican families valued education. Although this study involved only five families, it compensated for the small sample size with mixed methodology, employing both questionnaires, interviews, and field observations in both the home and school settings. Moreover, a relationship of trust or *confianza* existed between the researcher and participants, which facilitated access to the home environment and also may have contributed to a greater degree of candor in the responses.

The findings from Villenas and Deyhle's (1999) use of ethnographic research with Hispanic families found that the prevailing belief that Latino parents did not value education was a myth. Similarly, Johnson and Viramontes' (2004) study of the characteristics of family and school partnerships in the rural southeast United States, found that parents were advocates for their children's education, had high aspirations for them, but expressed doubts relative to their ability to navigate the American educational system. The study employed qualitative methodology in the form of interviews and focus groups and included staff and parents as participants. The primary limitation of the study was that the researchers were outsiders to the community, and thus the respondents may not have used complete candor in their responses.

Gilliam and Gerla (2004) studied the parent perceptions of participation with their children in project ROAR (Reach Out and Read) which involved university students conducting home reading visits with kindergarten children. The study found that Hispanic parents are eager to help their children, showed genuine concern, and reported positive changes in the way they felt about themselves as parents through participation.

Additionally, the program served as a springboard to future programs. The parent perspectives were gathered through parent logs and interviews. The ability to gather perceptive and observational data from parents within the home environment was a strength of this study.

Similarly, Aspiazu, Bauer and Spillett (1998) studied the phenomenon of the creation of an educational community center in the deep South for Hispanic parents and found that parents were motivated to participate predominantly for personal and/or family reasons, were genuinely concerned for their children's education, but expressed that a lack of English proficiency was the main obstacle to them helping their children.

Birch and Ferrin (2010) studied differences between parental participation of Mexican and American families in a rural Colorado community to ascertain, among other things, parental perceptions. Findings from the interviews with 18 mothers and 9 fathers revealed that parents felt that attendance at school events was important, were interested in getting involved but were unsure of how to start, not knowing the proper steps or roles and skeptical insofar as what they had to offer. Finally, the parents participated in the study out of a sense of duty to their children and felt empowered to have a voice. A qualitative design was appropriate; once again, however, the fact that the researchers did not have an established relationship within the community may have affected the candor of the participants' responses and therefore lessened the strength of the findings.

Jayroe and Brenner's (2005) findings in their evaluation of a summer and after school parent literacy program found that families reported that they participated in the program because they felt that they could help their children and wanted to, that

participation in the program helped parents with their own learning, and that they learned from one another and reported participating more in school life.

Quiocho and Daoud's study (2006), which compared teacher perceptions of Latino parent involvement and actual perspectives of Latino parents in Southern California, revealed that Latino parents demonstrated a nuanced view of the English Language curriculum and had high expectations for their children's academic achievement, wanted to be more involved but felt excluded at times. The study employed qualitative methodology through which both teachers and parents were interviewed. The juxtaposition of teacher and parent perspectives lent strength to the study, as it enabled the researchers to conclude that the teachers were operating from a deficit perspective which was somewhat negatively viewed by the parents and served as an impediment to their involvement.

Ramirez's (2003) study of Latino parents' perceptions on parental involvement and concerns for their children's education was set in a predominantly Hispanic Southern California community. The study revealed that parents felt that schools had lower expectations for their children, as well as for students of color, and that it was not their place to teach. They also felt that schools could and should communicate more openly. The study employed qualitative methodology in the form of taped interviews.

Valencia and Black's qualitative study of second to fifth generation Mexican-American families in Austin, Texas, found that there was both significant interest and involvement at home and within the school (2002).

In spite of the abundance of research studies, misunderstandings and disagreement about Latino families' roles and values regarding education are prevalent in



the research. For example, Moreno writes, “Observed differences in the teaching strategies between minority groups and their more successful counterparts [have] led many researchers to conclude that ethnic minority and low-income mothers do not provide their children with the necessary early teaching experiences to ensure later success in school” (2010, p. 528).

While Moreno suggests that the research may be somewhat off-base, others assert that Hispanic parents are unaware that American norms relative to education and parenting differ from the country of origin (Coatsworth, Pantin, & Szapocznik, 2002) and/or unaware of practices which can be used to assist their children in school in developing academic skills and/or what the school expects them to do (Hyslop, 2000).

Bailey, Skinner, Rodriguez, Gut, and Correa’s (1999) study of Mexican and Puerto Rican parents with special needs students found that awareness and use of services varied depending on country of origin or heritage. Moreover, there was an inverse relationship between awareness and satisfaction; in other words, the greater the awareness of services, the less the satisfaction. This study employed a mixed methodology of qualitative interviews and statistical analysis of responses. The use of mixed methodology lent strength to the findings but the researchers’ positions as outsiders to the district may have diminished the reliability of the findings.

The educational community’s cognizance of the intense socioeconomic factors confronting many CLD families, ironically, may become an obstacle, as educators assume that parents are too overwhelmed with addressing daily needs to bother them (Thorp, 1997). This may be further compounded by a presumed Hispanic cultural norm of absolute respect for the authority of the school and its teachers. In many cases

Hispanic parents may consider it rude to intrude in school life; they see the role of the school to educate and the role of the parent to nurture and don't necessarily recognize or understand the interplay between the two contexts (Espinosa, 1995). Latino parents may accommodate the recommendations of the school, even if they are not in agreement with them, out of respect and deference to the professional opinions and knowledge of school personnel. Gopaul-McNicol suggests that "educational practitioners tend to interpret this culturally determined role as 'passivity or disinterest'" (1998, p. 41)."

Carger's study of two Latino families sums up a more holistic Latino definition of education: "Latino families [espouse] a comprehensive, inclusive conception of educating children. Latino parents use the term *bien educado*. Translated literally, it means "well educated"; but in Spanish, it connotes a wider sense of being well-bred, mannerly, clean, respectful, responsible, loved, and loving" (1997, p. 42). Tangent to this definition is the value of "familism," which is central to Hispanic culture in particular, as immigrant families are often separated from their extended families and all they have is one another. This value must be considered when working with communities and community involvement programs (Aspiazu, Bauer, & Spillert, 1998).

### **Parental Involvement Programs: Design and Implementation**

The final section of the literature review provides an inventory, albeit not exhaustive, of innovative and collaborative parental involvement programs serving culturally and linguistically diverse parents. This section provides the reader with a sense of the types of programs which influenced and were modeled in the creation of the program which became the basis for this study.

The increased focus on the design of collaborative parent involvement programs over the last quarter century has produced a set of best practices to guide future programming. First and foremost when schools dedicate time and resources to parental involvement, the programs typically improve year to year (Sheldon, 2003). Through this focus, a shared understanding will be created, though Peña suggests that this must be the starting point by which both sides recognize and acknowledge mutual strengths and weaknesses (2000). Espinosa comes from a tangential position in asserting that it is programs which respond to the real needs and concerns which the parents have or express (1995). Along these lines, Ramirez (2003) cites Lucas, Henze and Donato's study of six Southwestern schools which had established positive relationships between these schools' knowledge of their student populations, culture, and academic growth.

Although most researchers agree and conventional wisdom confirms that this knowledge, like any body of knowledge, is established and built in an ongoing manner and through the context of a continuing relationship, actual needs assessments can serve as starting points to the learning process (Chávez-Reyes, 2010). Garcia and Hasson (2004) found in their assessment of over 20 years of program implementation in South Florida, that learning about student needs and interests through a pre-assessment and utilizing culturally sensitive and relevant curriculum were crucial to program success. This needs assessment can take various forms such as surveys, parent focus groups, or interviews. Moreover, it can collect a variety of information, such as (1) what meeting format would be most comfortable for parents (Waterman & Harry, 2008), (2) how are parents actively involved in the school (Igo, 2002), (3) did parents struggle with school

themselves (Rosenthal & Sawyers, 1996), and (4) perhaps most importantly, how the school can facilitate increased levels and frequency of participation?

Once barriers or challenges are identified, the school must be prepared and able to mitigate or remove them. For example, the use of flexible schedules (Marschall, 2006), providing transportation (Waterman & Harry, 2008), and developing culturally and linguistically sensitive communication strategies (Spaulding, Carolino, & Amen, 2004) are several suggested strategies. More specifically, Bailey et al. found that parents who were satisfied with involvement programs or services, “talked about the key person...who helped them navigate the service system” (1999, p. 376). This premise of a single contact person is often mentioned in the literature, though referred to by different appellations: community liaison (Chavez-Reyes, 2010; Garcia & Hasson, 2004; Ramirez, 2003), parent liaison (Waterman & Harry, 2008), bilingual coach (Spaulding, Carolino, & Amen, 2004), or home educators (Riggs & Medina, 2005).

Parental training or involvement programs can have a range of structures or purposes. Rosenthal and Sawyers identify five overall missions: educational support and drop-out prevention, parenting skills training, workshops where parents can judge their school’s quality, adult literacy programs, and parent tutoring programs for their own children (1996, p. 196).

The literature contains a variety of more specific curricular recommendations. Waterman and Harry suggest that parental trainings can be a context in which to have discussions about instructional approaches and school resources (2008). Spaulding, Carolino, and Amen make a similar suggestion in their mention of orienting families to the “expectations, challenges, and opportunities in the U.S. educational system” (2004, p.

39). The setting of these programs can be in the schools themselves or oftentimes occurs in some form of a family/community based learning center or Bilingual Parent Resource Center. Aspiazu, Bauer, and Spillent studied the creation of a community-based education center and found that Hispanic parents became actively involved in educational improvements when given appropriate opportunities (1998).

The final component of a well-designed program is a thorough evaluative component which measures the extent to which it has met its desired objectives (Sheldon, 2003; Bouffard & Weiss, 2008). It is important to note, as Epstein (1995) does, that “progress in partnerships is incremental...partnership programs take time to develop...The schools in our projects have shown that three years is the minimum time needed for an action team to complete a number of activities on each type of involvement and to establish its work as a productive and permanent structure in a school” (p. 13). Sink, Parkhill, and Molly’s (2005) research on the success of a family-centered literacy program in North Carolina concluded that starting small and letting things evolve was effective, but also having periodic evaluation was crucial.

The literature shows that programs such as these often fall under the label of family literacy services or programs, but what it also reveals is that there is a tremendous variety in program structure and objectives within this category. The genesis of family literacy programs could be traced to the passage of the Even Start legislation as part of Part B, Title I, of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. In H.R. 1385, family literacy services are defined as “services provided to participants on a voluntary basis that are of sufficient intensity in terms of hours, and of a sufficient duration, to make sustainable changes in a family...and that integrate the following: A.) Interactive literacy

activities between parents and children [and] B.) Equipping parents to partner with their children in learning” (Sapin, Padak, & Baycich, 2008). The National Center for Family Literacy was founded on the belief that the parent is the first and most influential teacher in a child’s life, building a love of learning within the family that is permanent (Darling, 2004).

Rodriguez-Brown, one of the founders of the FLAME program in Chicago, purports that family literacy programs are also settings for parents to learn how they can use the home environment to impact their children’s learning (2003). This assertion speaks to the myriad purposes for which a family literacy program may be designed. Family literacy programs are not about changing people, but rather equipping parents with tools, skills, and knowledge that can transfer to the workplace and build their capacity to support their children in the educational process (Darling, 2004). The overall premise is that a child whose family participates in a program such as this will benefit more, that is to say, achieve at a higher level than a student whose family did not participate (St. Pierre, Riccuti, & Rimdzius, 2005).

Riggs, Nathaniel, and Medina (2005) in their study of the impact of participation in an after-school academic support program in rural Pennsylvania called “Generación Diez (G10)” found that parents of children who had higher attendance rates in the after-school program reported more positive and regular interactions and communications with school.

Morrow, Mandel, and Young (1997) in their study of cohorts of first and second grade students and parents who participated in a family literacy program (44% Latino) found that parents were extremely enthusiastic and supportive of the effort and

opportunity. There was also a positive impact on reading at home and that strong connections between school and home lead to success. The methodological design of the study was strong, as it employed both treatment and control groups and used both measures in student achievement as well as parent feedback and perceptions.

There have been many opportunities for this hypothesis, if you will, to be tested, as family literacy programs have sprung up throughout the United States. For example, The Toyota Family Literacy Program has been implemented at fifteen sites in five cities and seeks to close the gap between Hispanic families and schools (Darling, 2004). Once again, the stated overall objective of this program goes far beyond literacy and speaks to bridge-building between school, home, and community.

The aforementioned Project Flame which is administered out of Chicago, states four assumptions under which they operate: (1) supportive home environment is crucial to literacy learning, (2) parents can have a positive impact on children's learning, (3) when parents are confident they are more effective teachers of their children, and (4) literacy is the most likely subject to be influenced by social and cultural forces (Shanahan, Mulhern, & Rodriguez-Brown, 1995).

Some offer criticisms of family literacy programs in that the term is a descriptive one but has been used far more prescriptively, resulting in organizers operating from a deficit model that "seeks to apply a one-size-fits-all" response to a host of complex social and learning social situations (Crawford & Zygouris-Coe, 2006, p. 262).

Despite this assertion, and ample examples of programs which do not approach their design and implementation from this perspective, the literature is also very clear as to best practices in recruitment and curricular design. Recruitment must take into

consideration a variety of factors, not the least of which is that Hispanic parents may not feel comfortable coming to school and/or engaging with school personnel. Therefore it is essential that program organizers are interested in working with Hispanic parents, are committed to making the program work, and are culturally sensitive (Nicolau & Ramos, 1990). For example, providing a welcoming and supportive environment (Lopez, Scribner, & Mahitivanichcha, 2001; Nicolau & Ramos, 1990), empowering and involving families in meaningful ways in program planning and development (Coatsworth, Pantin, & Szapocznik, 2002; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997), and thus giving them a sense of ownership (Nicolau & Ramos, 1990) are all presented as elements of effective programming. Lopez, Scribner, and Mahitivanichcha's (2001) five-month-long study of parental involvement practices of high performing schools in Texas and Illinois confirmed through qualitative interviews that factors such as a welcoming environment, the establishing of relational bonds, the empowering of parents, and parent education aimed at self-improvement and increased awareness were cited as keys to success by parents and school employees.

Clearly, designing a program with the creativity and flexibility to meet the many and varied needs of Latino adult students brings pedagogical challenges (Ortiz & Ordonez-Jasis, 2005). For this reason, it can be helpful to start the agenda with the parents' needs and interests; what often happens, however, is that the progression of the class moves toward a focus on the original objectives of the course designers (Nicolau & Ramos, 1990). This initial information gathering or needs assessment can be helpful, as parents reveal their interests, fears, or learning needs. For example, Project Flame creators found that Latino parents expressed a lack of understanding about how American



schools worked and differed from their own countries, did not necessarily know what the schools expected of them, and that their limited English proficiency and lack of formal schooling limited the support they could provide (Rodriguez-Brown, 2003).

Inasmuch as programs must be attuned to cultural differences, they must also be cognizant of individual differences; initial reflective conversations and learning from one another can be effective ways of vetting out and helping students resolve these issues (Ortiz & Ordóñez-Jasis, 2005). The challenge is that it requires an environment of trust and familiarity, which may not necessarily exist at the onset of a program, particularly one which is offered or set at the school. Jay and Rohl (2005) in their examination of factors which contributed to the success of a family literacy project in a low socio-economic suburb of Perth, Western Australia, found that parents became gradually more comfortable participating and expressing themselves as class went on. Furthermore, the program spawned other programs which built on the initial, albeit small, success of the first initiative. Therefore, the establishment of an environment of trust over a period of time needs to be something program planners consider.

More practically, addressing transportation and child-care needs for participants, whether by providing free child care services and transportation or scheduling classes in easily accessible public spaces has been shown to facilitate enrollment, retention, and completion. Cassidy, Garcia, Tejada-Delgado, and Garrett (2004) looked at factors contributing to the success of a learner-centered family literacy project hosted by Texas A & M University in collaboration with the Corpus Christi Independent School District. The study identified eight factors, including provision of child care, a learner-centered

curriculum, and respect for participants' culture, as contributing to success. This information was gleaned from parents at the end of the course.

### **Summary**

Virtually from the inception of formalized schooling, parental involvement was identified as important to the educational process. Gradually, over the course of the twentieth century, the parental involvement movement gained momentum in the form of parent-school organizations such as the PTA, as well as the legislative endorsement and mandating of parental involvement mechanisms within public school districts.

As the movement matured and developed, so has the assertion that effective programs involve a collaborative or synergistic relationship between school, home and community. These "overlapping spheres of influence," as Joyce Epstein refers to them, designate parents as equitable stakeholders and decision-makers in the process.

In spite of these recommendations, many, if not most, parent involvement programs involve a one-way flow of information from school to home. This may have to do with the deeply rooted societal belief in the delineation of the home and school environments and the respective roles of each.

As the conception of parental involvement programs has developed to a more inclusive, equitable construct, so has the assertion and research base positing that students from "at-risk" populations have more to gain from robust parent involvement programs and relationships. One such at-risk group is Hispanic-American students. Statistics reveal this group of students to have the highest drop-out rates of any other minority group. Language barriers and different cultural norms regarding parental participation in

schooling are commonly identified obstacles to involvement of culturally and linguistically diverse parents.

In spite of the caveat and acknowledgement that the term *Hispanic* holds within it a tremendously diverse group of people, generalizations about Hispanic parents are persistent and ubiquitous; for example, Hispanic parents see education as the job of the school, don't care about education, are uninvolved in their children's schooling, and have low aspirations for their children. These popular beliefs are in most cases not supported by the research. On the contrary, studies conducted with Hispanic parents have found that while Hispanic parents may have a respect for the authority of schools and their educational personnel and see their role as secondary in the education process, they do value education and see themselves as playing a role in this process. Furthermore, Hispanic-Americans generally express high hopes and aspirations for their children's future.

It is easy to understand why programs designed to involve Hispanic parents have often been conceived and operated from a deficit perspective. However, recommendations for designing programs for CLD parents include starting with a respect for cultural differences, perspectives, and expertise.

In order to better understand the Hispanic parent audience, a handful of studies examining collaborative involvement programs have been conducted. What they have found is that parents felt positive about being empowered to assist their children, appreciated the information and resources, and enjoyed and found it constructive to work, converse, and share experiences with fellow classmates. Also, effective programs and relationships tended to develop over time.

The persistence of misunderstandings about Hispanic parents on education and involvement, insufficient and/or inconsistent involvement, and lagging Hispanic academic achievement merit and justify additional research with culturally and linguistically diverse parents, particularly within the context of a learning environment.

The focuses of the literature review which are linked to this study's guiding questions and analysis are: Hispanic parents' aspirations for their children, perception of their role in the schooling process of their children, motivation or learning goals for participating in parent training programs, and perceptions of participation in parent involvement programs.

## Chapter III

### METHODOLOGY

As a preface to the description of the methodological design of this study, it is essential to understand its setting and context, as well as the perspective of the researcher. This researcher has worked within the field of education for approximately 18 years; all of those involved with Hispanic persons, and began a career as a volunteer English teacher in Costa Rica, where the researcher worked in a small rural public school. Since returning to the United States in 1996, the researcher has worked as a Spanish teacher and ESL teacher before moving into public school administration approximately ten years ago. This researcher has worked in school districts which, although predominantly White, have growing Spanish speaking populations. Being the only administrator who spoke Spanish in these districts, this researcher has spent many hours listening, speaking, and working with Hispanic parents. For the last six years this researcher has worked in the suburban school district in which this case study was set in various administrative roles, but consistently as the supervisor of the district's ESL program.

The setting of the study was a suburban town of approximately 11,000 residents, 1263 of them, or 11.6%, Spanish speaking (US Census, 2010). The district is a K-12 regional school district, includes two municipalities, and houses six schools, four K-5 neighborhood elementary schools, two in each town, a regional Grades 6 through 7 middle school, and a regional high school, including Grades 8 through 12.

The district's DFG is a GH, with a Title I student population of 1.9%, although this percentage is substantially higher in one of the two municipalities and in one of the elementary schools, in which the percentage is nearly 20%. The Title III population of the

district is 2.5%, although this percentage is higher in one of the municipalities and represents almost 20% of the student body in one of the elementary schools. Moreover, the overwhelming majority of students eligible under Title III are also eligible for Title I services.

The majority (72%) of the district's English Language Learners are of Hispanic background and reside in one of the district's municipalities. This town offers more affordable housing, including two family homes, store-top housing within the town's business district, and two apartment building complexes. Although the district has never formally gathered information regarding the occupations of its Spanish speaking families, in the countless informal conversations this researcher has had with parents, most parents have indicated that they are employed in construction, landscaping, the restaurant service industry, local supermarkets, and housekeeping. The majority of the families are from Mexico, many from Puebla, and have resided in the United States for approximately 5 to 16 years. Most of the Spanish-speaking ELLs are American citizens. This researcher has encountered one parent with a university level of education and few who have completed high school. Most parents have some level of written literacy in Spanish.

In my time in the district as the ESL supervisor, our department had been making an effort to involve and include our CLD families in school life more regularly. To this end, we began to host monthly parent meetings and translate written materials such as district enrollment and medical forms. As our contact with families increased, several things became readily apparent. First, we really had no idea who these people were; we didn't know them. Second, our Spanish speaking families seemed to operate almost anonymously within our schools and towns. Third, the unique needs of many of these

families stood in stark contrast to most of the other families. For example, many of these families qualified for free-and-reduced lunch.

The district receives modest Title I and III grants through the NCLB act and has been able to strategically use these funds to design programs to assist LEP and economically disadvantaged students such as summer enrichment classes, after-school homework clubs, and most recently the ESL summer parent institute. The genesis of the summer parent program which this case study explored was to build a bridge with our Hispanic families, to create a setting in which we could get to know them and they us, and to begin crafting a collaborative relationship.

Utilizing feedback from a parent-intake questionnaire, themes from the literature, and administrative prerogative, general topics or themes for the course were mapped out and relevant guest speakers from the community and the school district were identified and contacted for availability. An agenda, power point, and educational fact sheet handouts were developed to assist with instruction and to serve as deliverables for students. All participants were provided with a three-ring binder, a daily planner to keep dates and assignments, a bilingual Spanish to English dictionary, and a pencil case with a pencil, pen and post-it notes. Each week students were provided with hole-punched packets for the day's lesson, which they inserted into their binders. Course content, sequence, and pacing were adjusted over the course of the six weeks, based upon emerging learning needs as identified by the course teacher through the aforementioned data collection and feedback gathering mechanisms.

The summer parent institute consisted of six weekly sessions. Each class was two hours long and met in a private instructional room in the public library. The class period

culminated with a written class evaluation which parents filled out. The survey questions were written in both English and Spanish. The program was both Vygotskian and Freirian in that it took a quasi socio-constructivist approach in its development, seeking to mentor parents in order that they would feel more confident to mentor to their children, was participatory, and addressed real challenges and obstacles facing parents in communicating and working with schools.

The purpose of this study was to explore Hispanic parents' learning goals/motivations for participating in a New Jersey suburban district's summer parenting institute, their educational and personal aspirations for their children's future, their viewpoints on parental involvement and perceptions of constructive and useful elements of the program itself. Data that existed and data which were collected over the course of the recruitment, planning, and administration of the summer parent institute were analyzed for this research.

First, the data collected prior to the start of the program gathered information about the participants, including English and Spanish proficiency levels, learning interests, and challenges faced in the United States. The majority of the data, however, was collected during the administration of the program through class evaluation forms and reflective class assignments. The purpose of these data collections in the context of the program was to gauge student interest, comfort level, and perceptions of activities and to serve as a means for parents to explore and share their own feelings and thoughts. This dissertation sought to expand upon the usage of this data through an analysis positioning it relative to the current literature and research in the general area of collaborative involvement of culturally and linguistically diverse parents. This chapter provides a



description of the methodology of the study relative to its subjects or participants, data collection, and data analysis.

### **Subjects**

The subjects of this study were individuals who had participated or registered in a summer training program for parents of students enrolled in the district's English as a Second Language Program. Twelve parents participated in the program, 11 females and 1 male; 9 of the 12 parents attended regularly. All parents spoke Spanish as their first language; their country of origin was Mexico. The parents participating in the program had resided in the United States between 5 and 16 years. Students self-reported a range of English proficiency levels; most self-reported as advanced readers and writers of Spanish (see table below).

The setting of the study was a regional public school district consisting of two municipalities; however, participating parents came exclusively from one town, and principally from two K-5 elementary schools, although of the 12 participating, 3 parents also had older children in either the middle school or high school. All parents, but one, had at least one child who was an English Language Learner currently enrolled in the district's ESL program.

Table 2

*Self-Reported Language Proficiency Levels*

	Reading	Writing	Listening	Speaking
English	B (7)	B (11)	B (6)	B (12)
	I (8)	I (4)	I (9)	I (3)
	A (0)	A (0)	A (0)	A (0)
Spanish	A (10)	A (10)		
	I (2)	I (2)		
	B (3)	B (3)		

*Note: B = beginner; I = intermediate; A = advanced*

## **Procedures**

### **Recruitment and Planning**

The data analyzed in this dissertation had been collected and existed prior to the genesis of this study. This was an instrumental single-case study that explored a number of facets of parent participation in the ELL Summer Parent Institute, such as participants' attitudes toward parental involvement and practices of supporting their children's learning, as well as their understanding of expectation/roles of parental involvement in the United States.

Interest in participation in the ELL Summer Parent Institute was solicited at the same time and through the same correspondence that student enrollment was conducted. An informational flier was created providing information about the goals of the program,

the dates, and an enrollment sheet which asked for parents' names and contact information (Appendix A). This flier was sent home with an enrollment letter (Appendix B) for the summer ESL student program. The building ESL teachers collected the completed interest forms from parents. In total, 22 parents filled out and returned the interest form. Parents were informed that they could expect that they would be receiving a welcome letter (Appendix C) and questionnaire which would provide information to the school district to design the parent course.

A parent questionnaire was developed by the district to gather information about the participants and their learning interests (Appendix D). The content of the questionnaire was developed utilizing the following handbooks: *Assessing Success in Family Literacy and Adult ESL* (Holt and Van Duzer (Eds.), 2000); *Making Meaning, Making Change: Participatory Curriculum Development for ESL Adult Literacy* (Auerbach, 1992); *Practitioner Toolkit: Working with Adult English Language Learners* (National Center for Family Literacy, 2004); *Together is Better: Building Strong Relationships Between Schools and Hispanic Parents* (Nicolau & Ramos, 1990); and *The Family Literacy Resource Notebook* (Sapin, Padak, & Baycich, 2008)).

The questionnaire gathered information regarding country of origin, length of time in the United States, language proficiency levels in English and Spanish, as well as a checklist of topics which parents might be interested in learning. The topics were adapted from the aforementioned references and tailored to correspond with the length and scope of the program. The welcome letter and questionnaire were mailed home to parents; a pre-stamped envelope was included, pre-labeled with the return address of the school district. Of 22 questionnaires, 8 were returned initially by mail. Follow-up phone calls

were placed by the district to parents reminding them of the need to fill out and return surveys, and verbal reminders were given at ESL parent meetings held at school buildings. Parents who had not filled out surveys were directly reminded at the meetings; two parents filled the surveys out at the meeting, and others were provided with an additional copy of the survey as well as an additional stamped, pre-addressed envelope. In the week after the meetings, six additional surveys were returned. The following week a reminder flier was sent home via backpacks and mailed to all parents who had originally expressed interest even if they had not returned the survey. When the course was in session, an *open entry/open exit* approach was utilized; it was not mandatory for students to have been there for the first class, or the prior class, and students could exit the program whenever they chose.

### **Data Collection**

The case study drew information from several sources of data which had been previously collected by the district and to which the researcher had access. The first source was artifacts from the summer program which the participants had attended. These included the class evaluation forms which were used at the culmination of each of the parental training sessions (Appendix E), a mid-course evaluation (Appendix F), as well as written feedback and answers provided during the activities themselves (Appendix G). The third source was the observational data collected from a closure roundtable discussion conducted during the final summer class session.

The Closure Roundtable Discussion questions were as follows:

1. How do you feel to be finishing the course?
2. What have enjoyed about the classes? Why?

3. Have your children asked you about the class? What did you tell them?
4. What changes do you foresee in the way you communicate with the school and teachers?
5. What can the school district do to continue to help you?

### **Data Analysis**

The categories for the analysis of data were organized initially by the original guiding questions.

1. How do Hispanic parents describe their learning goals for participation in the summer institute?
2. How do Hispanic parents perceive their roles and responsibilities in their children's education?
3. How do Hispanic parents describe their future aspirations and dreams for their children?
4. How do Hispanic parents perceive the summer parenting institute to be useful and constructive?

All class assignments, class evaluation questions, observational topics, and field notes were reviewed in order to sort them appropriately by guiding questions. A combination of quantitative and qualitative data was used, as the surveys and class evaluation instruments employed both check boxes and open-ended responses. Written responses were coded according to themes. Triangulation of multiple data sources were used when possible to further validate conclusions. The case study was written in a linear analytic question-and-answer format. All parent responses written in Spanish were translated into English by the researcher who has studied and spoken Spanish over 30

years, taught high school level Spanish for three years in an accredited academic institution, and passed the New Jersey Spanish language certification exam.

This chapter outlined the methodological design of this study, which was an instrumental single-case study by nature. The setting of the study was a suburban school district in which a summer parenting institute was designed and implemented in working with 15 Hispanic parents who had a child or children enrolled in the district's English as a Second Language program.

Data which had been collected by the district over the course of the planning and administration of the program were analyzed and positioned against the research according to four guiding questions which explored Hispanic parental goals and motivations for participating in the program, perceptions of parental roles, aspirations for their children, and perceptions of constructive and useful elements of the program. The data were gleaned from a variety of sources including class evaluations, classroom activities, roundtable discussions, and surveys. A triangulation technique was used in the data analysis to identify common words, ideas, and themes amongst the various sources of data. The findings were presented and analyzed in a linear, analytic manner by guiding question.

## Chapter IV

### PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The focus of this study was to explore parental perceptions through an analysis of data collected during the planning and implementation of a summer training institute for parents of English Language Learners. The data which were used were pre-existent and available to the researcher. They were obtained from enrollment surveys, daily class evaluation forms with both closed and open-ended questions, reflective written class activities, field notes, and a culminating roundtable closure discussion. This information initially was collected by the district for the purpose of program planning and evaluation. The identities of all participants and the host school district have been maintained confidential.

The results of this study presented in the following chapter were organized according to the study's four guiding questions. The survey and discussion questions and parental responses were presented in English only and in most cases were translated from the original Spanish. The results were presented in this manner for the sake of clarity and readability for a non-Spanish speaking reader. However, a bilingual version of Chapter IV is presented in its entirety in Appendix H.

#### **Guiding Questions**

1. How do Hispanic parents describe their learning goals for participation in the summer institute?
2. How do Hispanic parents perceive their roles and responsibilities in their children's education?
3. How do Hispanic parents describe their future aspirations and dreams for their

children?

4. How do Hispanic parents perceive the summer parenting institute to be useful and constructive?

### **Guiding Question 1**

How do Hispanic parents describe their learning goals for participation in the summer institute?

The data analyzed to answer the first guiding question came from three sources: the parent information survey, an in-class cooperative learning activity, and an informal classroom discussion that was conducted during the first class session which asked students to talk about “why they were here.”

The first source, the survey, provided parents with a checklist of ten topics for parental involvement about which they were interested. The topics were related principally to literacy and academic support, as well as overall student motivation. The survey topics were derived from several parent program planning guides: *Assessing Success in Family Literacy and Adult ESL* (Holt and Van Duzer (Eds.), 2000), *Making Meaning, Making Change: Participatory Curriculum Development for ESL Adult Literacy* (Auerbach, 1992), *Practitioner Toolkit: Working with Adult English Language Learners* (National Center for Family Literacy, 2004), *Together is Better: Building Strong Relationships Between Schools and Hispanic Parents* (Nicolau & Ramos, 1990), and *The Family Literacy Resource Notebook* (Sapin, Padak, & Baycich, 2008).

The topics included on the checklist were the following:

- Ask your child to read to or with you
- Bring your child to the library



- Tell stories to your child
- Read for or with your child
- Motivate your child to do their homework
- Motivate your children to write
- Talk/Communicate with your child's teacher or school principal
- Visit your child's school
- Better understand school report cards
- Special Education (processes, laws, and rights)

Sixteen surveys were returned completed. Of the 16 respondents, 10 would attend the institute for at least one session. Two of the institute participants had registered for the course but did not fill out or turn in the intake survey.

Table 3

*Parent Learning Interests from Intake Survey*

Survey Item	Responses	Percent
Ask child to read	12/16	75%
Library visits	8/16	50%
Storytelling	9/16	56%
Read with child	11/16	69%
Motivate child to do homework	15/16	94%
Motivate child to write	16/16	100%

Talk with teacher/principal	8/16	50%
Visit school	12/16	75%
Understand report cards	9/16	56%
Special Education	7/16	44%

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The survey also contained an open-ended question which asked, “What challenges or difficulties have you encountered in the United States that you want to discuss in this class?” Of the 16 surveys, 9 were returned blank for this question; 3 of 7 respondents to the open-ended question ultimately did not attend the institute.

**Open-ended question responses.**

- My greatest challenge has been English, it is for this that I am attending a program at the library to learn English, because it is important to be able to support my children with their homework, my question is, are there more free programs to learn English that I may be able to attend?
- Difficulties understanding English
- The most difficult challenge is communicating with the teacher.
- Especially the English language
- Many [people] only listen when they want to, because we don't matter to them or because they are busy or because we aren't equal, it is necessary to treat everyone equal. Everything has continued to be a challenge or goal. One has to continue struggling forward, thank you for your attention.

- To understand reports from school, speak English more fluently for work and for school and to be able to help my children more
- The difficulties are: the language and be able to express what I feel and what I need to be able to realize my profession 100%. I am going to need more for the following grades of my daughter's school.

The second source of data for the first guiding question was a cooperative carousel activity which was conducted during the first session of the institute. The purpose of the activity was to gather feedback from parents as to questions they had about the American education system, the school district, the municipality, and some miscellaneous items. These questions would also help shape the lesson objectives and topics of study for the course.

There were four posters fixed to the walls around the classroom, and parents circulated around the room working in pairs to brainstorm and write down their questions. The questions were: (1) what questions do you have about the American educational system? (2) what questions do you have about the school district? For example, the teachers, schools, programs, grades, etc. (3) what questions do you have about the town in which you reside? For example, the government, and resources for families (4) what other questions do you have? The following section contains the questions which the parents wrote down and were transcribed directly from the posters.

### **Cooperative Carousel Activity Responses.**

#### ***Poster/Station 1.***

- How do you obtain information about college financial assistance programs?
- What students are eligible to obtain scholarships?

- Is it better or preferable that our children attend a university here or in our countries?
- Will our children have to take an exam to enroll in college?

***Poster/Station 2.***

- Is there a pre-school program?
- Are there reading programs in the school?
- What steps should teachers take when a child says things to [bullies] another?
- What differences are there in the elementary schools in the district?
- In what grade is it most necessary to support our children? We have heard that it is in third and fourth.
- In what way can we become involved in the educational program to work/collaborate with our children?

***Poster/Station 3.***

- Town Meetings

Where are the meetings?

When are the meetings?

What can we discuss in these meetings?

- What rights do we have as residents of <xxx>?
- How do we raise concerns about when some residents do not remove snow from the sidewalks?

***Poster/Station 4.***

- In case of a natural disaster, where can one evacuate?
- What can one do when Americans say bad words or things to us?

The third and final source from which data relative to the first guiding question were extracted was field notes, which were collected and transcribed during a class discussion held on the first day of class during which parents engaged in a think, pair, and share exercise and then shared with the class. There were only six students in attendance on the first night of the class; all six students shared their sentiments of why they had come to the class. The following notes were recorded by the class instructor during the discussion and then transcribed into digital format the same evening.

**Think, pair, and share field notes.**

- This student was a walk-on student who had not registered from XXX School. She indicated that her primary motivation for coming to the institute was to learn English. During the closure activity, however, she relayed the fact that she was glad that the class was going to focus on other skills and information as well.
- Indicated that she had come to the course to learn more English.
- This parent indicated that she was there to learn so that she could better help her children.
- This student indicated that she had enrolled in the course so that she could help her sons and daughters.
- This student indicated that she was there to learn skills and information that could help her help her children and to get more involved.
- This student indicated that she was there to learn skills and information that could help her help her children and get more involved.

In summary, in exploration of the first guiding question which focused on what ways parents described their learning goals for participation in the program, three data

sources were utilized: a program intake survey, a goal setting “think, pair, and share” activity conducted on the first day of class, and field notes from a roundtable discussion which was held on the first day of class, the prompting question of which was “Why are you here?” In the context of the program, the original purpose of these processes was primarily to conduct a needs assessment from the perspective of the parent participants as well as to become better acquainted with them. This represented the first focus of the research and literature against which the findings of this study were positioned: what motivates CLD parents to participate in programs such as this and what are they most interested in learning? The potential utility of this information was to guide future program planners, not only in how they go about conducting a needs assessment, but also to foster additional cultural understanding of Hispanic parents as learners.

The Hispanic ethnic group is so diverse that there is value in every study which further fills out the mosaic of what it means to be Hispanic. More specifically, this study looked at an enclave Hispanic community living amidst a community which is predominantly Caucasian and of a higher socioeconomic status. Parents’ primary learning interests were developing English proficiency, supporting one’s children and acquiring skills and information which could be used to assist children with their education.

### **Guiding Question 2**

How do Hispanic parents perceive their roles and responsibilities in their children’s education?

The data analyzed to explore the second guiding question were extracted primarily from an in-class cooperative exercise in which parents identified parental roles and responsibilities in four domains: during the school day, after school, with homework,

and in general helping their children to succeed. This framework was based on Joyce Epstein's typology of parental involvement. The questions were: (1) how can parents be involved during the school day in school events and activities? (2) How can parents help their children with homework? (3) How can parents be involved after the school day in school events and activities? (4) How can parents help their children succeed in school?

The purpose of this activity was to assess parents' pre-existing knowledge of varied parental involvement strategies such as those outlined in Epstein's typology as well as cultural norms vis a vis parental involvement. In the context of the program, this was done principally to assist in the planning of the trainings sessions. However, the findings relative to this guiding question were positioned against the research and literature regarding Hispanic cultural norms on parental involvement. This was relevant as there is a prevailing popular belief that Hispanic parents believe that it is the school's job to educate and the family's role to parent. Moreover, research studies have found that there is some truth to this belief, as evidenced by Hispanic parents' actual perspectives. This misconception and/or cultural perspective represent one of the common obstacles to the start-up of programs. The following section contains the actual questions which parents generated to the four prompts, which were transcribed verbatim.

**In-class cooperative activity responses.**

***Question 1: How can parents be involved during the school day in school events and activities?***

- Conference with teachers about activities
- Participate in classes, meetings, and conferences
- Attend class presentations

- Ask for information from teachers

***Question 2: How can parents help their children with homework?***

- Send them to the library (for older students)
- Check the backpack (for K-6 students) before leaving the house
- Establish a time after the school day to do homework

***Question 3: How can parents be involved after the school day in school events and activities?***

- Homework Assignments
- Ask them how school was
- Read with them for twenty minutes
- Check the student's grades
- Make sure that everything is ready for the next school day
- After completing homework and housework, take them to their sports

***Question 4: How can parents help their children succeed in school?***

- Motivate them to get involved in school activities
- Stimulate and reward when they do their homework and get good grades
- Support and fuel their dreams and interests
- Orient and guide them
- Create strategies to work with them at home
- Communicate with them and listen to them
- To be a teacher in the house
- Ask teachers about their behavior in school
- Have a home homework schedule



The second source of data was the class evaluation given at the end of the second class session. The evaluation questions used a Likert-type scale: the three possible responses for the first question were *Ningunos* (none), *Algunos* (some), and *Todos* (all). The three possible responses for Question 2 were *No me dio cuenta* (I did not know), *Un poco* (a little), and *Me dio cuenta* (I was aware).

***Question 1.***

Did you know the six different types of parental involvement or ways to get involved?

***Question 2.***

Did you know that students whose parents were involved and supported them tend to do better in school?

Table 4

*Class Evaluation Results Session 2*

Question	Responses		
	None	Some	All
1. Did you know the six different types of parent involvement or ways to get involved?	0 (0%)	9 (82%)	2 (12%)
2. Did you know that students who have parents who are involved and support them generally are more successful in school?	Not aware	A little	Was Aware
	0 (0%)	3 (27%)	8 (73%)

In short, the second guiding question examined in what ways Hispanic parents viewed their role in their children's education, as well as their level of understanding of

various ways in which parents can be involved in school and at home. Two data sets originally collected during the program were analyzed to gain insights in this regard; a cooperative learning exercise conducted during one of the class sessions, which asked parents to brainstorm parental involvement activities and roles, and a class evaluation, which parents filled out at the end of the session in which they were oriented to Epstein's typology. The findings from this guiding question may have relevance within the body of research, as the parents who participated in this program demonstrated a fairly sophisticated understanding of parental involvement and indicated that they were involved in a variety of ways. This overall finding, which will be analyzed in greater depth in Chapter V, runs counter to a commonly held belief about Hispanic parents which, as the literature indicated, is a deficit perspective.

### **Guiding Question 3**

How do Hispanic parents describe their future aspirations and dreams for their children?

The data analyzed to explore the third guiding question were extracted directly from a written homework activity assigned to parents on the first night of class. This exercise was conducted initially in the context of the program to provide parents with an opportunity to explore their own feelings and ideas about what they wanted for their children, as well as for those of fellow classmates and parents. Moreover, the district was seeking to emphasize and validate for parents that it is important to talk to their children about their dreams and aspirations and that their support of these things make a difference. The following section contains the parents' written responses, which were transcribed verbatim from the homework worksheet.

### **Dreams/Homework activity responses.**

- The dream for our children is to give them a good education and promote reading, so that they acquire good attitudes and are people with the fundamental principles and values to realize their dreams and goals and to be successful professionals as well as helpful to other people.
- My dream is to try and improve myself to be able to orient and help my children with the goals that they forge. My triumph will be to be in good health to be able to see my children succeed.
- Our dream for our children is for them to be what they want to be, also to be part of a successful network marketing business which they can expand to other countries and to be business people with principles and values.
- My dream for my three children is that they study in a university and obtain a Master's degree to have a good professional future, family life, and that they never forget their Hispanic roots.
- The dream I have is to see my children in the university, to have a professional career and to be able to contribute to society, for my son I would like to see him become a lawyer and my daughter a teacher or doctor, this is why I am trying to motivate them...so that they have a good future, this is what I would like but I always support their decisions because they have to choose what they want to study and be in the future and not force them to be something they do not like for parents it is grand task to communicate with our children in order to know what it is they want and to share their interests and ideas.
- What do I want my kids to do when they grow up?

I want xxx to be a lawyer.

I want xxx to be a model or cooker [chef].

I want xxx to be a reporter.

- For me the dreams of my children is what I want to motivate and support.

Parents found this exercise extremely rewarding and positive and demonstrated optimism and high expectations for their children's future. The study's findings relative to this guiding question were relevant in that they may serve to further debunk the prevailing belief that Hispanic parents are indifferent and have low expectations regarding their children's futures. Finally, the findings supported existing research studies with Hispanic parents which have revealed high expectations.

#### **Guiding Question 4**

How do Hispanic parents perceive the summer parenting institute to be useful and constructive?

The data analyzed to explore the fourth and final guiding question were culled principally from the daily class evaluations which the parents filled out at the culmination of the class sessions, a mid-class evaluation form, and observer notes from a closing roundtable discussion conducted at the end of the course.

These surveys contained two types of questions, Likert-style check-off items and open-ended questions. The results are presented in order of classes; recurring themes will be further analyzed in Chapter V. Finally, as these surveys were used initially to evaluate the class sessions, not all of the questions necessarily related to this research question.

The results are thus presented only for those questions which provide data on the research questions; the original evaluation forms can be found in Appendices E & F.

The first class evaluation asked students three questions with a Likert-type scale; the three possible responses were “*De ninguna forma* (in no way), *Un poco* (a little) and *Bastante/Mucho* (a lot)”.

***Question 1.***

Was it useful working in groups with your classmates?

***Question 2.***

Did you feel comfortable working in groups with your classmates?

***Question 3.***

Did you feel comfortable volunteering your ideas in the group activity?

Table 5

*Class Evaluation Results Session 1*

Question	Response		
	Not at all	A little	A lot
1. Was it useful working with classmates?	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	6 (100%)
2. Did you feel comfortable working in groups with your classmates?	0 (0%)	1 (17%)	5 (83%)
3. Did you feel comfortable volunteering your ideas in the group activities?	0 (0%)	2 (33%)	4 (77%)

The open-ended question on the first class evaluation was: What part of the session did you find most useful?

**Open-ended question responses.**

- For me in general on two questions I only put a little bit. Because it is the first day I felt a little timid, the next class will be better.
- It was interesting to know about the schools and our school district.

- To walk with my classmates to write questions in each of the posters that were attached to the walls
- It was useful because I thought that this course was for learning English but I felt very content to attend because I am learning very important things for my children's education. As I already involve myself in activities to motivate them to learn.
- The presentation with classmates and questions about the needs of families, about the town and schools
- The conversation

The second class evaluation asked students three questions with a Likert-type scale and an open-ended question. The survey questions were related more to the second research question; however, the open-ended question asked students the following: What was something useful that you learned in the class?

**Class evaluation responses.**

- The ideas for involving ourselves in the academic studies of our students
- The conversation
- Some of the real life experience from Mr. Cascone's parents and the woman who came to supervise us (BOE member)
- To learn about involvement to help our children
- We learned different factors to help our children communicate listen and support them.
- How to involve myself with my children in school activities and to help them with homework

- To understand children and teach them to listen so that they might accomplish going to university
- I liked that which we discussed and learned many things, thank you.
- I learned a lot of things because everyone gave different points of view, I learned from everyone especially the importance of our participation with our children.
- Tonight was something very good, everything.
- I am very content for all the conversation, thank you for the availability of childcare.

At the midpoint of the course, parents were given an opportunity to reflect on the experience to date and were asked the following: Up until now, what aspects, parts, or activities of the course have been most useful for you?

**Midyear evaluation responses.**

- All that we are learning is of great help to us as parents.
- Never have I had this type of information, therefore for me it has been and will be very important.
- The school orientation, and learning to use the computers
- Thank you for everything, it has been great, I like the conversations very much and learning a lot, everything has been useful.
- The activity of exploring computer sites about the school district and Bing Translator were very important and to learn a lot about experiences of other parents through conversations has been interesting.
- Everything has helped me to improve the education of my children.
- Everything has been very useful.

On the last day of the Institute, a culminating class discussion was conducted to bring closure to the class and to serve as a forum for parents to share their final thoughts on their experiences in the class. Notes were taken during the course of the conversation and transcribed into electronic format. The following section contains the instructor's notes verbatim as recalled from the class discussion.

**Closure roundtable discussion response field notes.**

***Question 1: How do you feel to be finishing?***

- bad...happy and sad...A lot of information, to motivate us to better our children.
- We wish we could have more time and continue, we don't want to stop doing what we are motivated to do right now. The book chicken soup for the soul is a Tesoro (treasure).
- Content (happy), would be interested in continuing another course, maybe in computers, it's important for us to put into practice the theory which we have learned. Thank you for the incentive chart, the kids love it and are very motivated by it.
- *Contenta* (happy), it has been bonito (nice), to meet with others, talk together, relate to one another, the class gave us an opportunity to talk about our dreams and to talk with our children about their dreams, we never really have the opportunity to do that.
- There are many opportunities for people for parents in this country but people have to take advantage of them.

***Question 2: What have you enjoyed about the classes? Why?***

- It is a good step to start to form an "equipo" or team.



- The class has given one motivation to feel good about oneself.
- Learning from one another, for example parents with older children
- It's like a soup; each person is like an ingredient, just like the book.

***Question 3: Have your children asked you about the class? What did you tell them?***

- My kids told me you have to go, you can't miss the class, you tell us we can't miss practice and school and you have to go.
- They were very enthusiastic about us participating; they looked forward to Mondays since we were coming to the library for the class. They were upset that we would no longer be coming to the program.
- My daughter had progressed in reading over the summer and my son is more interested in reading now that we are taking a more active interest.

***Question 4: What changes do you foresee in the way you communicate with the school and teachers?***

- Going to use website more to access information
- Will try and use e-mail to communicate with teachers
- Will prefer to just talk to teachers in person when I drop off my kids. It's easier for me since I don't have good technology skills and I don't write that well.

***Question 5: What can the school district do to continue to help you?***

- Computer and technology trainings

- Ongoing homework tips
- How do we receive more information about our children?
- Information on how we can get more involved

The fourth guiding question explored what aspects of the summer program parents found most constructive. These parental perspectives were analyzed in greater depth in Chapter V; however, overall parental feedback was overwhelmingly positive. More specifically, parents found the communication and collaboration with their classmates positive and constructive. They expressed an interest in continuing to learn and expressed a bittersweet sentiment about the program coming to a conclusion. The study's findings relative to this guiding question were relevant in that they may serve to reinforce and validate best practices in CLD program design and implementation; the findings supported much of the existing research studies with Hispanic parents which have revealed a willingness to work collaboratively with schools when there is perceived respect, trust, and value to what is being learned.

### **Summary**

The data presented in this chapter were collected during the planning and implementation of a six-week summer institute for Spanish speaking parents with students enrolled in the district's English as a Second Language program. The data were originally collected to learn more about the prospective participants, as well as to evaluate the program while it was in progress. The focus of this study was to more closely analyze this data in the context of the research and literature on parental involvement of Hispanic parents.

The data which were presented within this chapter and which were analyzed in the following chapter were extracted from the following sources: a parental intake survey, daily class evaluations, and reflective class assignments. The overall themes on which the data analysis focused and were positioned against the research were as follows: parent learning goals, parent aspirations for their children, and what parents found most constructive about the learning experiences.

## CHAPTER V

### ANALYSIS, CONCLUSIONS, and RECOMMENDATIONS

#### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore Hispanic parents' learning goals/motivations for participating in a New Jersey suburban district's summer parenting institute, their educational and personal aspirations for their children's future, viewpoints on parental involvement, and perceptions of constructive and positive elements of the program itself. Data that existed and were collected over the course of the recruitment, planning, and administration of the summer parent institute were analyzed for this research.

The researcher collected information on the following guiding questions:

1. How do Hispanic parents describe their learning goals for participation in the summer institute?
2. How do Hispanic parents perceive their roles and responsibilities in their children's education?
3. How do Hispanic parents describe their future aspirations and dreams for their children?
4. How do Hispanic parents perceive the summer parenting institute to be useful and constructive?

Chapter I included the background of the problem as well as the rationale and significance of the study. Chapter II presented a review of the literature relative to (a) history of parental involvement, (b) definitions/typologies of parental involvement, (c) parental involvement and student outcomes, (d) barriers and obstacles to parental

involvement, and (e) Hispanic parents and parental involvement programs. Chapter III described the methodology, including background on the setting of the study, the participants, and procedures for program recruitment and planning, data collection, and analysis. Chapter IV presented the findings of the study. Chapter V will provide a brief, broad synopsis of the research, a summary and analysis of the findings, conclusions of this study, and implications for practice and policy as well as recommendations for future research on parental involvement of culturally and linguistically diverse parents.

### **Summary of Research**

The overall objective of the No Child Behind Act of 2001 was to ensure equity of educational services for all students (Berger, 2004; Capps et al., 2004; James, 2003). In addition to tracking student achievement on standardized tests, the act transformed what had been family partnerships as a voluntary national goal to a legal mandate (Epstein, 2005). However, years after its enactment, school-parent partnerships continue to be narrowly conceived (Rogers, 2006; Fege, 2004). The underlying premise of modern progressive parental involvement is the empowerment of parents and the sharing of responsibility between school and home.

Perhaps the most prevalent theoretical parental involvement framework is that of Joyce Epstein, which identifies six types of parent involvement and the corresponding theory of overlapping spheres of influence which recognizes that the three contexts in which students operate--home, school, and community--can be drawn together or pushed apart. Henderson and Mapps's meta-analysis of 51 research studies (2002) found a positive relationship between student achievement and the existence of real partnerships between schools and families.

In regard to Hispanic families, Allen (2007) refers to the need for *confianza*, or trust between families and schools and the understanding that the relationship is reciprocal. Thus, program organizers who are interested in working with Hispanic parents must be committed to making the program work, culturally sensitive and intent on working collaboratively (Coatsworth, Pantin, & Szapocznik, 2002; Lopez, Scribner, & Mahitivanichcha, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Sosa, 1997; Nicolau & Ramos, 1990).

Findings from myriad research with Hispanic families have revealed that the prevailing belief that Latino parents did not value education was a myth (Aspiazu, Bauer, & Spillett, 1998; Birch & Ferrin, 2010; Gilliam & Gerla, 2004; Jayroe & Brenner, 2005; Johnson & Viramontes, 2004; Ramirez, 2003; Villenas & Deyhle, 1999). Nevertheless, misunderstandings and disagreement about Latino families' roles and values regarding education are prevalent in the research (Coatsworth, Pantin, & Szapocznik, 2002; Hyslop, 2000). In many cases Hispanic parents may consider it rude to intrude in school life; they see the role of the school to educate and the role of the parent to nurture and don't necessarily recognize or understand the interplay between the two contexts (Espinosa, 1995). Interestingly, Latino parents use the term *bien educado*. Translated literally, it means "well educated"; but in Spanish, it connotes a wider sense of being well-bred, mannerly, clean, respectful, responsible, loved, and loving (1997, p. 42).

### **An Analysis of the First Guiding Question**

How do Hispanic parents describe their learning goals for participation in the summer institute?

The responses to the survey administered prior to the start of the program to determine parental learning interests indicated that the two highest percentages were for “motivate child to do homework” (15/16 respondents, 94%) and “motivate child to write” (16/16 respondents, 100%). The lowest percentages were for “special education” (7/16 respondents, 44%), “library visits” (8/16 respondents, 50%), “talk to teacher/principal” (8/16 respondents, 50%).

These responses pointed to a sophisticated parent population which felt somewhat comfortable engaging and communicating with the school community. Conversely, 12 of 16 respondents (75%) indicated that they would like to learn about visiting school. This would seem to indicate that while parents knew how to communicate with the school, they didn’t necessarily feel comfortable visiting the school. This would also be corroborated by the parents’ familiarity with the different forms of parental involvement. Although the responses revealed knowledge of “parenting,” “learning-at-home,” and “communication” behaviors, “volunteering” and “decision-making” were virtually non-existent. Also, in the closing roundtable discussion parents expressed an interest in receiving more information on how to get involved.

In the open-ended question on the survey which asked about challenges facing parents, the most common response was the English language, which was mentioned in six of the seven responses. Language barriers are an oft cited obstacle to involvement and various researchers have received this feedback from parents (Aspiazu, Bauer, & Spillet, 1998; GoPaul-Nichol & Thomas-Presswood, 1988; Pena, 2000). The second most common response was the premise of helping one’s children. One of the responses did

hint at the idea of inequitable treatment of Hispanic parents on the part of school officials and within American society.

In the third data source for the first guiding question, the carousel activity, the theme of supporting one's children also emerged. Parents posed questions about college and university such as financial aid, entrance exams, and how to obtain information about college, which demonstrated a sophisticated perspective.

Parents also expressed an interest in knowing how they could collaborate with the schools and in what grades did supporting their children become most important. The idea of how to deal with discriminatory comments, either by another student or a passerby on the street, was expressed on two of the different posters. One was related more to student bullying in the school and the other was in regard to treatment by other adults in public. Regardless, the premise of discrimination was raised.

The fourth and final source was the field notes from the opening roundtable discussion, which asked parents to share why they had come to the program. In the parent responses, there were two prevalent sentiments; one was the desire to learn more English, which two of the six parents explicitly stated. However, they also expressed that they were there to learn skills and information that could help them help their children. This supported other research that has been done in the field such as that of Jayroe and Brenner (2005) in which they evaluated a summer and after-school literacy program and found that parents reported wanting to better help and assist their children as a primary motivation for participation.



## **An Analysis of the Second Guiding Question**

How do Hispanic parents perceive their roles and responsibilities in their children's education?

The first data source which was used to explore this second guiding question was a cooperative activity during which parents worked with a partner to brainstorm ways in which they felt parents could assist students in different aspects of school life: during the school day, with homework, after the school day (school events/activities) and overall to be successful in school. The four questions were derived in part from Epstein's typology of parental involvement, and thus the answers or questions which parents provided were cross-referenced with the typology.

The first type of parental involvement as defined by Epstein is "parenting," which involves creating home conditions or an environment which supports learning. Parents wrote various answers which demonstrated their awareness that the home environment can support learning and that the parents were taking steps to do this. The following answers represented evidence or examples of parenting:

- Check the student's backpack (for K-6) before leaving the house
- Check the students' grades
- Make sure that everything is ready for the next school day
- After completing homework, take them to their sports
- Stimulate and reward them when they do their homework and get good grades
- Create strategies to work with them at home
- Be a teacher in the house
- Have a homework schedule

The second type of parental involvement which was reflected in the parents' answers was "communication." Communicating was a parenting role which parents were clearly aware of and used. Answers relating to communication were written down in all four domains: during school, homework, after school, and in general academic success. Moreover, the answers alluded to the importance of two-way communication with teachers and listening to their children. The answers relating to communication were as follows:

- Conference with teachers, participate in conferences
- Ask for information from teachers
- Ask them [children] how school was
- Communicate with them [children] and listen to them
- Ask teachers about their behavior in school
- Orient and guide them
- Support and fuel their dreams and interests

The third type of parental involvement which appeared consistently in the answers which parents gave was "learning at home." Parents clearly saw it as their role to assist students in the home, as much as possible, with schoolwork and the development of academic skills and literacy skills. The following answers illustrated this perspective.

- [Assist] with homework assignments
- Create strategies to work with them at home
- Be a teacher in the house

The remaining types of parenting, volunteering, decision-making, and collaborating with the community were virtually non-existent in the parents' answers

other than one answer under “how parents can be involved during the school day,” which stated “participate in classes, meetings, and conferences”. What this singular data set showed was that parents were well aware of and practicing parenting practices at home. Relating to school matters, they understood that their involvement matters and that the guidelines and support they provide at home make a difference.

These findings were in contrast to the assertions of other researchers who contend and/or have found that Hispanic parents lack knowledge of American norms relative to parenting and education (Coatsworth, Pantin, & Szapoczik, 2002), practices that can be used to assist their children in developing academic skills (Hyslop, 2000), or what American schools expect of them (Rodriguez-Brown, 2003). Admittedly, the parents involved in this study, did not cite a lot of specific strategies for home support, which is important to note and a valid consideration for future programs, which could add tools to the parental toolbox in the form of home learning support.

Decision-making and collaborating with the community are admittedly more sophisticated forms of parental involvement which are sparse even amongst more enfranchised parent populations. It is reasonable to assert that a lack of English, deference to the authority and decision making of the school, and lack of awareness of community agencies and services could explain the lack of knowledge of these forms of involvement. Other researchers have found that while parents expressed a genuine interest in wanting to be more involved, they lacked the understanding and information as to how to go about doing it (Birch & Ferrin, 2010).

The findings from the aforementioned collaborative activity were corroborated by the second source of data used to explore this second guiding question. The second data

source came from Likert-style survey questions which were posed to parents as part of the class evaluation for the lesson during which Epstein's typology was introduced to them. The results showed that all of the parents were familiar with some of the parenting types; 9 of 11 (82%) were familiar with some, and 2 of 11 (12%) were familiar with all of them.

### **An Analysis of the Third Guiding Question**

How do Hispanic parents describe their future aspirations and dreams for their children?

The data that was reviewed for the third guiding question came from a reflective homework assignment that was given on the first night of class. It asked parents to tell what their dreams were for their children and asked them to speak with their children about what their dreams were for themselves. The student answers were not analyzed as part of this research.

The rationale for the activity within the context of the program was to provide an opportunity for parents to reflect on what they wanted for their children at the beginning of the parent institute as part of the goal-setting and motivational phase of the class. It was chosen as a guiding question for the study, as there is evidence in the literature and research of perceptions within the educational profession that Hispanic parents have low educational aspirations for their children and do not value education. For example, Quicho and Daoud's (2006) comparative study of perspectives of teachers and Hispanic parents in southern California found that while parents reported high expectations for their children, teachers perceived Hispanic parents as removed and disinterested.

There were several common themes which emerged from the answers; seven parents completed this activity. The overarching sentiment was that parents wanted to support their children in order for their children to realize their dreams and to be successful. Parents defined success in different ways; for example, for some parents success was defined as having good attitudes and principles in addition to being successful professionals. This was in line with Carger's (1997) ethnographic study of two Latino families, which concluded that their conception of educating their child to be *bien educado* meant "respectful, loved, loving, and responsible, as well as professionally and academically successful."

Additionally, two parents specifically mentioned their children going to university and one mentioned a master's degree. Professions such as lawyer, doctor, teacher, international business, and journalism were stated specifically in the responses. The importance of being good people, having happy family lives and good futures, and maintaining their Hispanic heritage were also mentioned.

The findings of this study largely corroborated the findings of other research studies reviewed which found that Hispanic parents were advocates for their children's education and had high aspirations (Valencia & Black, 2002; Villenas & Deyle, 1999). Unlike the parents with whom Villenas and Deyle conducted research, the parents of this study did not express one hint of pessimism insofar as their children's ability to navigate the educational system and to be successful in their futures. In this regard the parents of this study responded more similarly to the parents who participated in Gilliam and Gerla's Project ROAR (Read Out and Read) (2004), who were found to be eager to help

their children, showed genuine concern, and reported positive changes in the way they felt about themselves as parents through participation.

One parent expressed a highly sophisticated perspective on the role of parents in supporting their children's dreams when she wrote, "I always support their decisions because they have to choose what they want to study and be in the future and not force them to be something they do not like for parents it is a grand task to communicate with our children in order to know what it is they want and to share their interests and ideas."

### **An Analysis of the Fourth Guiding Question**

How do Hispanic parents perceive the summer parenting institute to be valuable and constructive?

The data analyzed to address the fourth and final guiding question were culled principally from the daily class evaluations which the parents filled out at the culmination of the class sessions, a mid-class evaluation form, and observer notes from a focus group conducted at the end of the course.

After reviewing the responses from the above data sources, there were two themes which emerged insofar as what parents found productive, enjoyable, and constructive about the experience. The first and predominant theme was the interacting, conversing with, and hearing perspectives of fellow classmates. Sosa (1997) and Hoover-Dempsey and Sander (1997) cite the presence of fellow community members and interactions between them as keys to working with Hispanic families. This assertion was supported in the findings of this study.

After the first class, in which parents had been asked to work collaboratively, the class evaluation asked them how they had felt about the experience: Were they

comfortable working with classmates? Did they feel it was useful and did they feel comfortable sharing ideas? This was done to gauge parent comfort-level moving forward in the course. It was uncertain how parents would react to this, as previous experiences with parents at building ESL meetings had shown them to be somewhat introverted and not overly communicative with one another.

The survey confirmed that parents found it extremely useful and the overwhelming majority of parents felt comfortable doing so. Not as many felt comfortable sharing ideas, but this was the first day and parents did grow gradually more comfortable sharing with one another in small and large group settings as the class progressed. These two points were corroborated by the research which indicates that the collaboration and sharing are typically something parents value and appreciate and that they grow gradually more comfortable as the program progresses (Jay & Rohl, 2005).

Parents' appreciation for communicating and collaborating with classmates would emerge from various other data sets. In the open-ended response on the first class evaluation, when asked what part of the class parents found most useful, the following responses supported this viewpoint:

- To walk with my classmates to write questions on the posters that were attached to the walls
- The presentation with classmates and questions about the needs of families, about the town and schools
- The conversation

The open-ended question of the class evaluation from the second class asked parents to talk about one thing which they learned which was most useful. The following answers reflected the value that parents placed on working and hearing from others:

- The conversation
- I learned a lot of things because everyone gave different points of view, I learned from everyone especially the importance of our participation with our children.

The mid-course evaluation asked parents what had been the most useful parts of the course up to this point in the course. The following parent responses also reflected parents' appreciation of collaboration and sharing:

- I like the conversations very much
- To learn a lot about experiences of other parents through conversations has been interesting.

Finally, on the last day of the class a roundtable closure discussion was conducted during which parents had an opportunity to reflect on the experience and share their feelings. This data was drawn from field notes taken that day memorializing the conversation. The following were responses to the questions which were asked:

How do you feel to be finishing?

What have you enjoyed about the classes? Why?

- Happy, it has been nice, to meet with others, talk together, relate to one another, the class gave us an opportunity to talk about our dreams and to talk with our children about their dreams; we never really have the opportunity to do that.
- Learning from one another, for example parents with older children



The feedback parents provided in the final roundtable conversation was overwhelmingly positive. It was an emotional session, laughs were shared and tears were shed, parents expressed the sentiment that they did not want the experience to end. In the end, parents had come to feel comfortable with one another and in their environment. Steps had been taken from the onset of the program to make parents feel valued and appreciated and to feel confident that the school district had theirs and their children's best interests in mind. This premise of *confianza* and comfort-level is clearly prescribed in the literature and research as a necessary component of building successful parent involvement programs, particularly with CLD families (Allen, 2007; Chavkin & Gonzalez, 1995; Thorp, 1997).

The second overarching theme of what parents found useful and constructive was when they were equipped or provided with what they perceived to be useful knowledge, skills, and resources. The customization and tailoring of the course content to meet the specific needs of one's community is cited in the literature and research as crucial to designing and implementing an effective involvement program for CLD parents (Quiocho & Daoud, 2006). It was evident in the feedback provided by parents that they valued the learning experiences which had been provided.

The following is a sampling of some of the specific things parents referenced in their responses to class evaluation questions, the mid-year evaluation, and the closure roundtable discussion which exemplified this sentiment.

- The ideas for involving ourselves in the academic studies of our student
- To learn about involvement to help our children

- How to involve myself with my children in school activities and to help them with homework
- It's interesting to know about the schools and our school district.
- We learned different factors to help our children communicate, listen, and support them.
- The activity of exploring the computer sites about the school district and Bing translator were very important.
- The book *Chicken Soup for the Soul* (A Spanish copy had been provided to parents as a deliverable) is a treasure.
- Would be interested in continuing another course, maybe in computers
- Thank you for the incentive chart, the kids love it and are very motivated by it.

What emerged from these responses was that parents valued training which they perceived and understood would help them parent more effectively and support their children. This is one of the premises of program design and adult learning that make it practical and have real world applications.

### **Conclusions**

With the passage of ESEA in 1965, the United States established a federal legal mandate for equal educational opportunities for all students regardless of race, ethnicity, and disabilities. Almost forty years later the No Child Left Behind Act added additional levels of requirements and accountability in this regard. While one could argue that these landmark laws have led to positive changes in the educational systems, the statistics clearly indicate that the achievement of minority students continues to lag far behind that of their White counterparts.

The aforementioned legislation recognizes the importance of parents and their involvement to student achievement and success, thus requiring school districts to implement policies, procedures, and programs which facilitate meaningful and collaborative parental involvement. However, there are myriad obstacles which often hinder minority and/or economically disadvantaged families from being involved with schools. Some of those factors are specific to the family conditions, but others are connected to the deficit lens through which schools often view the involvement of minority and/or economically disadvantaged families; basically, they can't and they won't, so we don't.

This is certainly true for Hispanic families, who are often facing the additional barrier of English proficiency. Hispanic-Americans are the fastest growing minority group in the United States and already represent a substantial percentage of the overall population and school-age student population. The United States has a vested and vital interest in enfranchising this population and ensuring that Hispanic children, like all children, are being educated effectively to be positive, independent, and productive citizens. Still, at a time when there is every reason to be moving forward in coming together, one could argue that we are more divided than ever on issues of immigration, language, and culture. Indeed, even the small sample of parents in this study alluded to being the recipients of racism and discrimination.

It is for these reasons that programs such as this district's summer parent institute and studies such as this one need to be conducted, encouraged, and built on. We who understand their importance must press on, building capacity and fostering understanding. There were a number of insights gleaned from this study which will be

helpful to the host school district in continuing to collaborate and build relationships with its CLD parents, as well as for other districts, schools, or organizations looking to do the same.

Part of the value of this study, as outlined in the first chapter, was the fact that it involved working with Hispanic parents in a suburban setting and in this respect was somewhat unique, as most studies have been conducted in either urban and/or rural settings. The parents who participated in this study live amidst a predominantly White English-speaking community that is of middle to upper class in socioeconomic status. The school district which their children attend does place a keen emphasis on academics and the importance of parent involvement. Similarly, the ESL program has also made involvement a focus of parental education over the last several years. The findings of this study would indicate that this outreach is working. Parents understood the importance of parenting behaviors, communicating, and learning at home. One could argue that living amidst a community with these values and norms has helped. However, at no time did it appear that the parental behaviors which families talked about were somehow foreign to them. This refutes to some extent that White, middle-class conceptions of parental involvement are thrust upon minority parents and that they are forced to adhere to these conceptions. In the end whether Epstein's typology stands in contrast to what one may have been accustomed to in one's native culture or country, it does represent an effective roadmap.

Future parental outreach and involvement initiatives with CLD parents in the district should address Epstein's parent involvement types of volunteering and decision-making. It would appear that Hispanic parents require a little more guidance and

encouragement to get involved in these capacities, and certainly the language barriers present obstacles. Insofar as volunteering, this can be accomplished if teachers and school officials are more proactive and direct in their invitations and communication to Hispanic parents of volunteer opportunities through which they may share their knowledge, experiences, skills, culture, and talents. In the end, none of the parents indicated that they felt unwelcome in the schools, but a welcoming environment is important if volunteering is going to be sustained. Parents may come once, but if they are not made to feel comfortable and accepted, they might not come again.

Decision-making is a little more difficult for first generation Hispanic immigrants; they may indeed feel as if they cannot or should not be directly involved in the decision-making of the school or school district. Of course, it is their legal right to do so, not to mention that it makes sense from an organizational standpoint to have their input. ESL parent councils, which are also mandated by legislation, are a good step in the right direction, but more productive for school districts would be to have Hispanic parent involvement in the regular parental feedback loops and mechanisms which exist such as PSOs/PTAs, coffee with the principal, etc. As long as ESL parental feedback is “siloe” as its own entity, its usefulness and impact will be limited.

While parents did indicate that through their own parenting behaviors and learning at home strategies they were assisting their children in school, they did not provide a lot of specificity with regard to strategies and techniques. Interestingly, some of the ones they mentioned had been the focus of previous training programs which had been provided by the school district. This is not to say that everything parents knew they learned from the school district. However, what it did illustrate was that parents use the

tools with which they have been equipped. Just as schoolteachers stay abreast of current methodology and add tools to their toolbox, so can parents. It is important to note and a valid focus for future programs to add to the parental skill set in the form of home learning support. Finally, regardless of the specific topics and learning focuses of the program, interweaving development of English language proficiency into the courses is a must. Not only did it emerge as an expressed need by parents, but also conventional wisdom tells us that a parent who can communicate in English will be more likely to participate in higher level involvement activities such as decision-making.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

It is important to preface this section by reiterating that this study analyzed data which had been collected during the course of planning and implementation of a parental involvement program. The data were originally collected by the district to evaluate the program and to gauge, amongst other things, parent satisfaction. The decision to explore the data in the context of a case study was realized after the program had come to its natural conclusion. Regardless, based upon the findings and conclusions of this research, additional areas of study are recommended. In the following section this researcher is using the term “replication” flexibly, as there are truly no two parental involvement programs which are exactly the same; indeed, that was one of the salient findings of this study. That being said, researchers wishing to replicate this study may want to do the following:

- Use a larger sample of parents in order to get additional perspectives, opinions, and insights.

- Replicate the study using qualitative methodology, including interviews and/or focus groups to capture, more in depth, the experiences of the parents.
- Conduct the program for a longer period of time to study differences in parental perceptions over time.
- Conduct a longitudinal mixed-methodology study that both explores experiential and perceptive data and outcome-based quantitative data.
- Study the impact of participation in a parental involvement program on frequency and nature of successive parental involvement of program participants.
- Study the impact of parental participation on student outcomes such as attendance, literacy levels, or grades.
- Conduct a similar study with parents of high-school-age students.
- Conduct the study in a different demographic region, either rural or urban.
- Conduct a study with a diversity of Hispanic countries of origin, as this study involved only parents from Mexico.
- Conduct a study with a diversity of races; e.g., Hispanic, Black, White and Asian.

### **Recommendations for Practice**

- Provide learning opportunities for culturally and linguistically diverse parents which provide an open and comfortable forum for parents to share information with one another and with the school district and to obtain information and resources which they and the district deem prudent.
- Devise a three-year vision plan which sets long-term global goals for the parental programs and how the district foresees the programs building and evolving year to year.

- When communicating and “advertising” a parental program to CLD parents, build in multiple forms of communication which are as personalized as possible in the target language and are disseminated close to the start date of the program.
- When designing and advertising a program to CLD parents, emphasize the practical and real-world skills and knowledge with which parents will be equipped. Parents are more than willing to discuss aspirations, roles, and feelings; but real-world, practical, marketable skills will likely bring more parents through the door.
- Design objectives for the program but go into the class flexible and open to parent input and teachable moments.
- Have support staff on site to assist with child care and co-teaching, particularly with hands-on activities, such as technology training.
- Share the parental perspectives gathered during the course of a program with the district’s teachers through faculty meetings to build awareness and sensitivity.
- Share the experiences and findings from studies with culturally and linguistically diverse families with other school districts and through state, local, and national professional associations.

### **Recommendations for Policy**

- Involve a broader group of stakeholders in the planning and implementation of the program; namely, educators from outside of the ESL discipline.
- The program featured in this study was funded entirely with Title III NCLB grant money. Designate grant money and/or school district funds for training and education of CLD parents.



- Designate a staff member or members to coordinate parental training and education programs for CLD parents, as well as to serve as a liaison between parents and the school district.
- Create a district-wide multi-stakeholder task force, including parents, to evaluate current programs, make recommendations for programs, and disseminate information to the community.

### **Synopsis**

Fifty million people of Hispanic origin reside in the United States. Of the K-12 student population, 22% is Hispanic. Roughly one in four Hispanic Americans live in poverty, and approximately two in ten Hispanic students drop out of school. American society has a vested interest, if not a responsibility, to ensure that this group of people enjoys greater degrees of academic and professional success.

American public schools have long been recognized as a source of vital support for all students, particularly those at risk, such as Hispanic-Americans. Ensuring safe and effective school environments remains the most influential factor on student achievement. However, the importance of parental involvement and home, school and community collaboration should not be underestimated. Landmark federal legislation has reinforced the importance of parents in the educational process; but practice has remained largely disconnected.

This schism between home and school is often widened by factors such as race, socioeconomics, and language proficiency. Compounding this breach are misconceptions and stereotypes about cultural norms of parenting. Culturally and linguistically diverse parents tend to be seen from a “deficit” perspective as opposed to a “fund of knowledge”

perspective. In order to help our students and their parents, we must know them and acknowledge that they all bring strengths and skills to bear.

In spite of its vast population in the United States, the Hispanic community remains relatively anonymous and misunderstood by the host culture. It is for this reason that studies such as this one have value. Every study which informs researchers and practitioners alike on who our Hispanic countrymen and women are, what they value, and how they view the educational system will contribute to practice.

This study found that despite economic hardships and educational and linguistic limitations, the parents of this case study subscribed to the “American Dream.” They had faith that the American educational system was a pathway to this dream and were doing everything within their resources to assist their children to achieve it. It is this researcher’s hope that this small study and the successive works which may spring from it will represent a “tipping point” whereby the deficit perspective will be abandoned once and for all. Instead, we will move forward together as one people, unified and committed to truly not leaving any child or family behind.

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Appendix A  
Program Recruitment Flier



## **OJO: Estimados Padres/Familiares y Guardianes**

Es nuestro placer ofrecerles a ustedes una oportunidad educativa gratis para todos los padres, familiares e/o guardianes de los alumnos quienes están matriculados en el programa de inglés como segunda lengua.

*Cuando:* Este verano, cinco clases, una vez semanal: Junio 27, Julio 5, 11, 18, 25. Entre las 7-9 por la noche.

*Donde:* Las clases tocarán a la biblioteca de <xxx>.

En este curso aprenderá:

- Estrategias para ayudar a su hijo(a), sobrino(a), nieto(a) con el aprendizaje de leer.
- Cuales son los recursos de las bibliotecas de <xxx> o <xxx>.
- Frases y vocabulario en el inglés que puede usar en las conferencias escolares.
- Obtener información del sitio electrónico del Internet del distrito escolar.
- Y más... También queremos saber lo que ustedes quieren aprender.



Se ofrecerá servicios niñeras gratis para los participantes durante las clases.

Si tenga cualquiera pregunta por favor comuníquense conmigo:

Señor Cascone

Director de Personnel, Distrito Escolar de <xxx>

(201) 664-0880 x 2002

[scascone@<xxx>.org](mailto:scascone@<xxx>.org)

Si está interesado participar en el programa de verano para adultos indica "Sí" con un cheque por abajo, llene la parte abajo y devuelve esta hoja, lo mas pronto posible, al la maestra de ESL o por correo a la dirección siguiente.

<xxx> Regional School District  
Attention: Mr. Cascone

\_\_\_Sí, me gustaría en el programa.

Por favor llene la parte por abajo con la información suya:

Su(s)Nombre(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Número de teléfono (casa)\_\_\_\_\_ (celular)\_\_\_\_\_

e-mail (correo electrónico)\_\_\_\_\_

Nombre(s) de su(s)  
hijo(s)\_\_\_\_\_

Grado(s)/Nivel(es) en el Septiembre  
2010\_\_\_\_\_



Se ofrecerá servicios niñeras gratis para los participantes durante las clases.



Appendix B

Program Enrollment Letter

March 2011

Dear Parent or Guardian,

It is my pleasure to inform you about a wonderful learning opportunity for your child. This summer, once again we will be running a program for all the district's E.S.L. students which will offer oral and written language instruction in English. Activities will address the basic academic skills of reading, writing and math. Most important, perhaps, will be the opportunity for students to develop oral communication skills. The only registration requirements are that you reside within the district and your son or daughter is an E.S.L. student.

The program will be located at <xxx> School in <xxx> and will run from July 7<sup>th</sup>-July 29<sup>th</sup>. The hours of the program are from 8:30-12:30. It is important to note, that daily attendance is required.

The program is **FREE** for the district's E.S.L. students; however, you are responsible for providing your own transportation to the school. Someone will contact you shortly to confirm and finalize the registration.

Sincerely,

J. Scott Cascone  
Director of Personnel.

**Please complete the bottom section, cut-off and return to your child's E.S.L. teacher A.S.A.P**

Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Town/ State/ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: (H) \_\_\_\_\_ (W) \_\_\_\_\_ (C) \_\_\_\_\_

Student's School \_\_\_\_\_

Grade as of September 2011 \_\_\_\_\_

Marzo, 2010

Estimados familiares:

Es mi placer informarles a ustedes de una oportunidad de aprendizaje para su hijo(a). Este verano vamos a ofrecer un programa escolar y co-curricular para los alumnos de inglés como segunda lengua (E.S.L.). El programa se ofrece instrucción para escribir y hablar en el idioma inglés y da atención a las habilidades académicas como leer y las matemáticas. Más importante, sin embargo, para los alumnos será la oportunidad de desarrollar su capacidad para comunicarse oralmente. Los únicos requisitos son ser un residente del distrito escolar y un alumno(a) de E.S.L del distrito escolar de <xxx>.

El programa estará ubicado a la escuela de <xxx> en el pueblo de <xxx>. El programa empezará el cinco de Julio hasta el veinte y nueve y de Julio. Las horas del programa son de las 8:30 por la mañana hasta las 12:30 por la tarde. Es importante anotar que la asistencia diaria es importante.

El programa es **GRATIS** para alumnos de E.S.L. del distrito de <xxx> pero la familia está responsable para su propio transporte a la escuela.

Sinceramente,

Scott Cascone  
Director de Personnel

**Por favor, llene la parte abaja complamente, cortela y devuelvasela a la maestra de E.S.L., lo más pronto**

Nombre de alumno(a) \_\_\_\_\_

Nombre de padre/madre/familiar \_\_\_\_\_

Direccion/Calle \_\_\_\_\_

Pueblo/ Estado/Codigo Postal \_\_\_\_\_

Número de teléfono \_\_\_\_\_

Escuela que asiste \_\_\_\_\_

Grado/Nivel en el Septiembre 2009 \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix C

Participant Welcome Letter

Mayo, 2011

Estimado Padre/Familiar,

Me gustaría tomar una oportunidad darle a usted bienvenido(a) al programa de verano para las familias. He recibido su formulario de registración. Por favor si pueda tomar una oportunidad llenar el cuestionario que incluye, lo agradecería. Esta información me dará una mejor idea de como debo organizar el programa. Si no se siente cómodo contestando cualquiera pregunta, simplemente déjela vacía. Por favor devuélveme el cuestionario en el sobre encellado que incluye lo más pronto posible.

Si tenga cualquiera pregunta, podemos repasar el cuestionario a la próxima reunión o se puede comunicarse conmigo por teléfono o correo electrónico. Estoy bien feliz a tomar con usted este camino de aprendizaje cooperativa y estoy aquí para servirles.

Sinceramente,

J. Scott Cascone

**Appendix D**  
**Parental Intake Survey/Questionnaire**

## Programa del Verano Para Los Padres

### INFORMACIÓN DE LOS ESTUDIANTES

Apellido:	Nombre de pila:	Segundo nombre:	Nombre Preferido	Grado de ingreso:	Género:
					Masculino <input type="checkbox"/> Femenino <input type="checkbox"/>
País de nacimiento:	Ciudad:	Número de teléfono de casa		Número de celular (si dispone):	
Estado:					
¿Cuántos años en los E.E.U.U.?:					

Nombre de los Niños	Asiste a la Escuela	Grado
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

¿Tiene un niño(a) quien está en un programa de Educación Especial, ¿Tiene un IEP? ☐ No ☐ Si

¿Necesita servicios niñeras durante de las clases nocturnas?

☐ No ☐ Si (si afirmativo, indica cuantos a la derecha) ¿Cuántos?

¿Ha asistido su niño(a) en veranos pasados el programa de inglés como segunda lengua? ☐ No ☐ Si  
(si afirmativo, conteste las preguntas por abajo)

¿El programa le ayudaba a mi niño con el aprendizaje de inglés?

1 ☐ De ninguna forma   
 2 ☐ Un Poco   
 3 ☐ Bastante/Mucho   
 ☐ No sé

¿Hubo oportunidades para participar los padres en el programa?

1 ☐ De ninguna forma   
 2 ☐ Un Poco   
 3 ☐ Bastante/Mucho   
 ☐ No sé

### INFORMACIÓN SOBRE IDIOMAS

¿Cuál es tu nivel de capacidad con el inglés?

	Principiante	Intermedio	Avanzado
Hablar	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Escuchar	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Escribir	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

¿Cuál es tu nivel de capacidad con el español?

	Principiante	Intermedio	Avanzado
Leer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Escribir	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### **Intereses de Aprendizaje**

¿Sobre que quisiera aprender o hacer más para promover más las habilidades y costumbres para leer y el éxito de su niño(a) en la escuela?

- ☐ Pide a sus niño(a) que les lean a/o con ustedes
- ☐ Lo Lleva al niño(a) a la biblioteca.
- ☐ Le dicen cuentos al niño(a)
- ☐ Lee para/con el niño(a)
- ☐ Le Motiva al niño(a) hacer la tarea
- ☐ Habla/Comunica con los maestros de su niño(a) e/o el director de la escuela
- ☐ Les Motiva a los niños escribir
- ☐ Visita la escuela de su niño(a)
- ☐ Entender mejor los reportes escolares de calificación
- ☐ Educación Especial (procesos, leyes, derechos de padres)

### **Comentarios Adicionales**

¿Qué retos o dificultades ha enfrentado en los Estados Unidos que quiere discutir en la clase?



Appendix E

Class Evaluation Forms

Class Evaluation  
*Evaluación de Clase*

June 27th

Was it useful working in groups with your classmates?

*¿Fue útil trabajar en grupos con sus compañeros?*

☐ De ninguna forma      ☐ Un Poco      ☐ Bastante/Mucho

Did you feel comfortable working in groups with your classmates?

*¿Se sintió cómodo(a) trabajando con sus compañeros de clase?*

☐ De ninguna forma      ☐ Un Poco      ☐ Bastante/Mucho

Did you feel comfortable volunteering your ideas in the group activity?

*¿Se sintió cómodo(a) voluntando sus ideas en la actividad de grupos?*

☐ De ninguna forma      ☐ Un Poco      ☐ Bastante/Mucho

What part of the session did you find most useful?

*¿Qué fue la parte de la sesión más útil?*

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Did you know the 6 different types of parental involvement or ways to get involved?

*¿Ya sabía usted los seis diferentes tipos de involucramiento o maneras para involucrarse los padres?*

☐ Ningunos      ☐ Algunos      ☐ Todos

Did you know that students' whose parents were involved and supported them tend to do better in school?

*¿Sabía usted que los alumnos quienes tienen padres involucrados y que les apoyaron generalmente tienen más éxito académico?*

☐ No me dio cuenta      ☐ Un poco      ☐ Me dio cuenta

Did you know that the academic situation for Hispanic-American students and families was so serious?

*¿Ya sabía usted que la situación académica y socioeconómica para muchos alumnos y familias hispanas fue tan seria?*

☐ De ninguna forma      ☐ Un Poco      ☐ Completamente

What was something useful you learned today?

*¿Qué fue algo útil que aprendió usted hoy?*

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Will you use the sample e-mail to communicate with the school?

*¿Va a usar usted el ejemplo de "e-mail" para comunicarse con los maestros?*

☐ Sí ☐ Probable No

If no, please explain why and what additional assistance you would need?

*Si no, por favor, explique porqué y que más asistencia o instrucción necesitaría para hacerlo*

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Will you use the sample telephone dialogue you learned to call the school?

*¿Va a usar usted el ejemplo del diálogo telefónico que aprendió para llamar a la escuela?*

☐ Sí ☐ Probable No

If no, please explain why and what additional instruction or practice you would need?

*Si no, por favor, explique porque y que más instrucción o practica necesitaría para hacerlo*

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	Principiante	Intermedio	Avanzado
¿Cuál es tu nivel de capacidad con las computadoras?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

¿Tiene usted una computadora en la casa?

☐ Sí

☐ No

¿Tiene usted acceso al Internet?

☐ Sí

☐ No

Which of the library services which you learned about tonight were you or your child already using?

*¿Cuáles de los servicios e/o programas de que las directoras le informaron a usted ya estaba usando usted o su niño?*

1.

2.

3.

Which of the library services or programs did you not know about?

*¿Cuáles de los servicios e/o programas de que las directoras le informaron a usted fueron nuevas para usted (o sea, no le dieron cuenta sobre ellos)?*

1.

2.

3

Do you plan to use these services, if so, which ones?

*¿Cree que vaya a usar usted estos servicios, cuáles?*

1.

2.

3.

Which of the strategies we learned tonight, were things you already did with your child?

*¿Cuáles de las estrategias que aprendió esta noche, fueron cosas que ya hizo con su hijo?*

1.

2.

3.

Which of the strategies we learned tonight were new to you?

*¿Cuáles de las estrategias que aprendió esta noche, fueron nuevas para usted?*

1.

2.

3.

Otros Comentarios:

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Appendix F  
Mid-Course Evaluation Form

What aspect or part of the class do you believe will help you the most to communicate with the schools or teachers?

*¿Qué aspecto o parte de la clase cree usted que va a ayudarlo lo más para comunicarse con la escuela o los maestros?*

☐ Practica de conversación      ☐ Orientaciones Tecnológicas      ☐ Las dos igualmente

Would you be interested in receiving ongoing computer training?

*¿Le interesaría recibir más tutoría tecnológica (de computación)*

☐ De ninguna forma      ☐ Un Poco      ☐ Bastante/Mucho

Have you utilized the child care services?

*¿Ha aprovechado los servicios niñeras que se ofrece durante las clases?*

☐ Sí      ☐ No

Up until now, what aspects, parts or activities of the course have you found most useful?

*¿Hasta ahora, cuáles aspectos, partes o actividades del curso han sido los más útiles para usted?*

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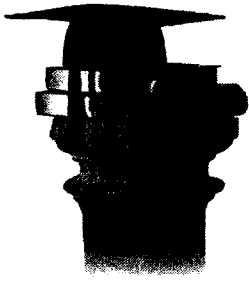
Do you have a town library card?

☐ Sí      ☐ No

*¿Tiene usted una tarjeta a la biblioteca pública para sacar libros?*



**Appendix G**  
**Course Feedback Activities**



Station/Estación # 1: What questions do you have about the American Educational System? For example, the universities, high school etc.

¿Qué preguntas tienen sobre el sistema educativo americano? Por ejemplo las universidades, el colegio etc.

Station/Estación # 2: What questions do you have about the <xxx> Regional School District? For example, the teachers, schools, programs, grades etc.

¿Qué preguntas tienen sobre el distrito escolar de <xxx>? Por ejemplo los maestros, las escuelas, los programas, las notas etc.

Station/Estación # 3: What questions do you have about the town of <xxx>? For example, the government, and resources for families.

¿Qué preguntas tienen sobre el pueblo de <xxx>? Por ejemplo el gobierno, los recursos para las familias etc.

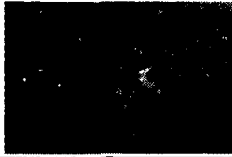


Station/Estación # 4: What other questions do you have?

¿Qué otras preguntas tienen?

Actividad de Tarea  
Homework Activity # 1:  
June 27th, 2011

Nombre (Name) \_\_\_\_\_



¿Qué es su sueño para su niño(a), niños(as)? Se puede escribir un párrafo, unas oraciones, palabras o usar dibujos o fotos.

*What is your dream for your child? You can write a paragraph, sentences, words, or use pictures or photographs.*

Hable con su niño(a), niños(as), y preguntele que quiere ser cuando es un adulto. ¿Qué dijo/dijeron? Se puede escribir un párrafo, unas oraciones, palabras o usar dibujos o fotos.

*Talk with your child/children; ask them what they want to be when they go grow up. You can write a paragraph, sentences, words, or use pictures or photographs.*

## Responsabilidades/Papeles de Padres (Responsibilities and Roles of Parents)

¿Cómo pueden estar involucrados los padres durante el día escolar en eventos o actividades escolares?

How can parents be involved during the school day in school events and activities?

1

¿Cómo pueden ayudar los padres a los niños con la tarea?

How can parents help their children with homework?

2

¿Cómo pueden estar involucrados los padres después del día escolar en eventos o actividades escolares?

How can parents be involved after the school day in school events and activities?

3

¿Cómo pueden contribuir los padres al éxito académico de sus niños?

How can parents help their children succeed in school?

4

## Appendix H

### Chapter IV: Bilingual Version

## Chapter IV

### PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The focus of this study was to explore parental perceptions through an analysis of data collected during the planning and implementation of a summer training institute for parents of English Language Learners. The data which were used were pre-existent and available to the researcher. They were obtained from enrollment surveys, daily class evaluation forms with both closed and open-ended questions, reflective written class activities, field notes, and a culminating roundtable closure discussion. This information initially was collected by the district for the purpose of program planning and evaluation. The identities of all participants and the host school district have been maintained confidential.

The results of this study presented in the following chapter were organized according to the study's four guiding questions.

1. How do Hispanic parents describe their learning goals for participation in the summer institute?
2. How do Hispanic parents perceive their roles and responsibilities in their children's education?
3. How do Hispanic parents describe their future aspirations and dreams for their children?
4. How do Hispanic parents perceive the summer parenting institute to be useful and constructive?

## Guiding Question 1

How do Hispanic parents describe their learning goals for participation in the summer institute?

The data analyzed to answer this research question came from three sources: the parent information survey, an in-class cooperative learning activity, and an informal classroom discussion that was conducted during the first class session which asked students to talk about “why they were here.”

The first source, the survey, provided parents with a checklist of ten topics for parental involvement about which they were interested. This instrument was used to determine in which topics parents were most interested in learning. However, the topics were related principally to literacy and academic support, as well as overall student motivation. The survey topics were derived from several parent program planning guides: *Assessing Success in Family Literacy and Adult ESL* (Holt and Van Duzer, Eds., 2000); *Making Meaning, Making Change: Participatory Curriculum Development for ESL Adult Literacy* (Auerbach, 1992); *Practitioner Toolkit: Working with Adult English Language Learners* (National Center for Family Literacy, 2004); *Together is Better: Building Strong Relationships Between Schools and Hispanic Parents* (Nicolau & Ramos, 1990); and *The Family Literacy Resource Notebook* (Sapin, Padak, & Baycich, 2008).

The topics included on the checklist were the following:

- Ask your child to read to or with you
- Bring your child to the library
- Tell stories to your child
- Read for or with your child

- Motivate your child to do their homework
- Motivate your children to write
- Talk/Communicate with your child's teacher or school principal
- Visit your child's school
- Better Understand school report cards
- Special Education (processes, laws, and rights)

16 surveys were returned completed. Of the 16 respondents, 10 would attend the institute for at least one session. Two of the institute participants had registered for the course but did not fill out or turn in the intake survey.

Table 3

*Parent Learning Interests from Intake Survey*

Survey Item	Responses	Percentage
Ask child to read	12/16	75%
Library visits	8/16	50%
Storytelling	9/16	56%
Read with child	11/16	69%
Motivate child to do homework	15/16	94%
Motivate child to write	16/16	100%
Talk with teacher/principal	8/16	50%
Visit school	12/16	75%
Understand report cards	9/16	56%



---

The survey also contained an open-ended question, which asked, “What challenges or difficulties have you encountered in the United States that you want to discuss in this class?” Of the 16 surveys, 9 were returned blank for this question; 3 of 7 respondents to the open-ended question ultimately did not attend the institute.

**Open-ended question responses.**

- Mi reto mas grande ha sido el Ingles es por eso que asisto a un programa para aprende Ingles en la biblioteca, porque es muy importante para poder apoyar a mis hijos con sus tareas, mi pregunta es...¿Existen mas programas gratis para aprender ingles a los que yo puedo asistir?

My greatest challenge has been English, it is for this that I am attending a program at the library to learn English, because it is important to be able to support my children with their homework, my question is, are there more free programs to learn English that I may be able to attend?

- Dificultades en entender ingles

Difficulties understanding English

- El reto mas dificil es comunicarse con el maestro.

The most difficult challenge is communicating with the teacher.

- Especialmente el idioma de Ingles

Especially the English language

- Muchos solo escuchan cuando quieren, si no, no les importa, por que a lo mejor estan muy ocupados o no somos iguales es necesario tratar a todos igual. Todo

sigue siendo un reto o meta. Tiene uno que seguir luchando para adelante. Thank you por su atencion.

Many [people] only listen when they want to, because we don't matter to them or because they are busy or because we aren't equal, it is necessary to treat everyone equal. Everything has continued to be a challenge or goal. One has to continue struggling forward, thank you for your attention.

- Entender los reportes de la escuela, hablar más fluído el ingles para trabajar y para la escuela y poder ayudar mas a mis hijas en la escuela

To understand reports from school, speak English more fluently for work and for school and to be able to help my children more

- Las dificultades son: el idioma y poder expresar lo que siento o lo que necesitas para poder realizar a 100% mi trabajo. Voy a necesitar mas para los siguientes grados de mi hija en la escuela.

The difficulties are: the language and be able to express what I feel and what I need to be able to realize my profession 100%. I am going to need more for the following grades of my daughter's school.

The second source of data for the first research question was a cooperative carousel activity, which was conducted during the first session of the institute. The purpose of the activity was to gather feedback from parents as to questions they had about the American education system, the school district, the municipality, and miscellaneous items. These questions also helped shape the lesson objectives and topics of study.

There were four posters fixed to the walls around the classroom, and parents circulated around the room working in pairs to brainstorm and write down their questions. The questions were: (1) what questions do you have about the American educational system? (2) what questions do you have about the school district? For example, the teachers, schools, programs, grades etc. (3) what questions do you have about the town in which you reside? For example, the government, and resources for families (4) what other questions do you have? The following section contains the questions which the parents wrote down and were transcribed directly from the posters.

**Cooperative carousel activity responses.**

***Poster/Station 1.***

- ¿Cómo obtiene información sobre programas de asistencia financier para ir la Universidad?

How do you obtain information about college financial assistance programs?

- ¿Que alumnos son eligibles para obtener becas?

What students are eligible to obtain scholarships?

- ¿Es necesario [major, preferible] que nuestros hijos estudien aquí la Universidad o en nuestros países?

Is it better or preferable that out children attend a university here or in our countries?

- ¿Nuestros hijos necesitan realizar un examen para ingresar a la universidad?

Will our children have to take an exam to enroll in college?

***Poster/Station 2.***

- ¿Hay un program de pre-school?  
Is there a pre-school program?
- ¿Hay programas para leer en la escuela?  
Are there reading programs in the school?
- ¿Que pasos deben tomar los maestros cuando un niño le dice de cosas a otro?  
What steps should teachers take when a child says things [bullies] to another?
- ¿Que diferencias hay en las escuelas primarias en el distrito escolar?  
What differences are there in the elementary schools in the district?
- ¿En que grado escolar es mas necesario apoyar mas a nuestros hijos? Eschuchado que es en el 3 a 4 grado?  
In what grade is it most necessary to support our children? We have heard that it is in 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>.
- ¿De que forma se puede involucrar en el programa educativo, para cooperar con nuestros hijos?  
In what way can we become involved in the educational program to work/collaborate with our children?

***Poster/Station 3.***

- Reuniones del pueblo
  - ¿Dónde se realizan las reuniones?
  - ¿Cuando se hacen las reuniones?
  - ¿Que se puede pedir o discutir en esas reuniones?

- Town Meetings

Where are the meetings?

When are the meetings?

What can we discuss in these meetings?

- ¿Que derechos tenemos como residentes de <xxx>?

What rights do we have as residents of <xxx>?

- ¿Hacer preguntas sobre la limpieza cuando es el tiempo de nieve y algunos residentes no limpian los pasillos/sidewalk?

How do we raise concerns about when some residents do not remove snow from the sidewalks?

***Poster/Station 4.***

- ¿En caso de un desastre natural, dónde puede uno acudir?

In case of a natural disaster, where can one evacuate?

- ¿Que se puede hacer cuando unas personas Americanas nos dicen palabras malas?

What can one do when Americans say bad words or things to us?

The third and final source from which data relative to the first research question was extracted was field notes, which were collected and transcribed during a class discussion which was held on the first day of class during which parents engaged in a think, pair, and share exercise and then shared out with the class. There were only six students in attendance on the first night of the class; all six students shared their sentiments of why they had come to the class. The following notes were recorded by the class instructor during the discussion and then transcribed into digital format the same evening.

**Think, pair, and share field notes.**

- This student was a walk-on student who had not registered from XXX School. She indicated that her primary motivation for coming to the institute was to learn English. During the closure activity, however, she relayed the fact that she was glad that the class was going to focus on other skills and information as well.
- Indicated that she had come to the course to learn more English.
- This parent indicated that she was there to learn so that she could better help her children.
- This student indicated that she had enrolled in the course so that she could help her sons and daughters
- This student indicated that she was there to learn skills and information that could help her help her children and to get more involved.
- This student indicated that she was there to learn skills and information that could help her help her children and get more involved.

In summary, in exploration of the first guiding question which focused on what ways parents described their learning goals for participation in the program, three data sources were utilized: an program intake survey, a goal setting “think, pair, and share” activity conducted on the first day of class, and field notes from a roundtable discussion which was held on the first day of class, the guiding question of which was, “Why are you here”? In the context of the program, the original purpose of these processes was primarily to conduct a needs assessment from the perspective of the parent participants, as well as to become better acquainted with them. This represented the first focus of the research and literature against which the findings of this study was be positioned: what

motivates CLD parents to participate in programs such as this and what are they most interested in learning. The potential utility of this information is to guide future program planners, not only in how they go about conducting a needs assessment, but also to foster additional cultural understanding of Hispanic parents as learners.

The Hispanic ethnic group is so diverse that there is value in every study which further fills out the mosaic of what it means to be Hispanic. More specifically, this study looks at an enclave Hispanic community living amidst a community which is predominantly Caucasian and of a higher socioeconomic status. Parents' primary learning interests were developing English proficiency, supporting one's children, and acquiring skills and information which could be used to assist children with their education.

### **Guiding Question 2**

How do Hispanic parents perceive their roles and responsibilities in their children's education?

The data analyzed to explore the second guiding question were extracted primarily from an in-class cooperative exercise in which parents identified parental roles and responsibilities in four domains: during the school day, after school, with homework, helping their children to succeed. This framework was based on Joyce Epstein's typology of parental involvement. The questions were: (1) How can parents be involved during the school day in school events and activities? (2) How can parents help their children with homework? (3) How can parents be involved after the school day in school events and activities? (4) How can parents help their children succeed in school?

The purpose of this activity was to assess parents' pre-existing knowledge of varied parental involvement strategies such as those outlined in Epstein's typology as

well as cultural norms vis a vis parental involvement. In the context of the program, this was done principally to assist in the planning of the trainings sessions. However, the findings relative to this guiding question were positioned against the research and literature regarding Hispanic cultural norms on parental involvement. This was relevant as there is a prevailing popular belief that Hispanic parents believe that it is the school's job to educate and the family's role to parent. Moreover, research studies have found that there is some truth to this belief, as evidence by Hispanic parents' actual perspectives. This misconception and/or cultural perspective represent one of the common obstacles to the start-up of programs. The following section contains the actual questions which parents generated to the four prompts which were transcribed verbatim.

**In-class cooperative activity responses.**

***Question 1: How can parents be involved during the school day in school events and activities?***

- Platicar con los maestros sobre las actividades  
Conference with teachers about activities
- Participar en las clases, juntas, conferencias  
Participate in classes, meetings, and conferences
- Asistir a las presentaciones de clase  
Attend class presentations
- Pedir información de los maestros  
Ask for information from teachers

***Question 2: How can parents help their children with homework?***

- Mandarlos a la biblioteca (para alumnos mayores)



Send them to the library (for older students)

- Chequear la mochila (para alumnos K-6) antes de ir a casa

Check the backpack (for K-6 students) before leaving the house

- Establece un tiempo después de día escolar para hacer la tarea

Establish a time after the school day to do homework

***Question 3: How can parents be involved after the school day in school events and activities?***

- Las tareas

Homework Assignments

- Preguntales como les fue a la escuela

Ask them how school was

- Lee con ellos por veinte minutos

Read with them for twenty minutes

- Chequear las notas escolares

Check the student's grades

- Asegurarse de que todo este listo para el siguiente día

Make sure that everything is ready for the next school day

- Despues de tareas y trabajo en la casa llevarlos a su deporte

After completing homework and housework, take them to their sports

***Question 4: How can parents help their children succeed in school?***

- Motivarlos a involucrarse en las actividades escolares

Motivate them to get involved in school activities

- Estimular y premiar cuando hacen la tarea y sacar buenas notas

Stimulate and reward when they do their homework and get good grades

- Apoyar e impulsar los sueños y intereses que tienen

Support and fuel their dreams and interests

- Orientar y guiarlos

Orient and guide them

- Crear estrategias para trabajar con ellos en casa

Create strategies to work with them at home

- Comunican con ellos y escuchan a ellos

Communicate with them and listen to them

- Sea maestro en casa

To be a teacher in the house

- Preguntar a los maestros por el comportamiento de ellos en la escuela

Ask teachers about their behavior in school

- Tener horarios en casa para hacer la lectura

Have a home homework schedule

The second source of data was the class evaluation given at the end of the second class session. The evaluation questions used a Likert-type scale: the three possible responses for the first question were *Ningunos* (none), *Algunos* (some), and *Todos* (all). The three possible responses for Question 2 were *No me dio cuenta* (I did not know), *Un poco* (a little), *Me dio cuenta* (I was aware).

### ***Question 1***

Did you know the six different types of parental involvement or ways to get involved?

¿Ya sabía usted los seis diferentes tipos de involucramiento o maneras para involucrarse los padres?

***Question 2***

Did you know that students' whose parents were involved and supported them tend to do better in school?

¿Sabía usted que los alumnos quienes tienen padres involucrados y que les apoyaron generalmente tienen más éxito académico?

Table 4

*Class Evaluation Results Session 2*

Question	Responses		
	None	Some	All
3. Did you know the six different types of parent involvement or ways to get involved?	0 (0%)	9 (82%)	2 (12%)
4. Did you know that students who have parents who are involved and support them generally are more successful in school?	Not aware	A little	Was Aware
	0 (0%)	3 (27%)	8 (73%)

In short, the second guiding question examined in what ways Hispanic parents viewed their role in their children's education, as well as their level of understanding of various ways in which parents can be involved in school and at home. Two data sets originally collected during the program were analyzed to gain insights in this regard: a cooperative learning exercise conducted during one of the class session, which asked

parents to brainstorm parental involvement activities and roles, and a class evaluation, which parents filled out at the end of the session in which they were oriented to Epstein's typology. The findings from this guiding question may have relevance within the body of research, as the parents who participated in this program demonstrated a fairly sophisticated understanding of parental involvement and indicated that they were involved in a variety of ways. This overall finding, which will be outlined in greater detail in Chapter V, runs counter a commonly held belief about Hispanic parents which, as the literature indicated, is a deficit perspective.

### **Guiding Question 3**

How do Hispanic parents describe their future aspirations and dreams for their children?

The data analyzed to address the third research question were extracted directly from a written homework activity assigned to parents on the first night of class. This exercise was conducted initially in the context of the program to provide parents with an opportunity to explore their own feelings and ideas about what they wanted for their children, as well as for those of fellow classmates and parents. Moreover, the district was seeking to emphasize and validate for parents that it is important to talk to their children about their dreams and aspiration and that their support of these things make a difference.

The following section contains the parents' written responses, which were transcribed verbatim from the homework worksheet.

#### **Dreams/homework activity responses.**

- El sueño para nuestros hijos es darles una buena educación y promoverles la lectura y así obtengan buenas actitudes y sean personas con principios y valores

fundamentales y logren sus sueños y metas y sean empresarios exitosos y ayuden a las demás personas.

The dream for our children is to give them a good education and promote reading, so that they acquire good attitudes and are people with the fundamental principles and values to realize their dreams and goals and to be successful professionals as well as helpful to other people.

- Mi sueño es tratar de superarme para poder orientar y ayudar a mis hijos en las metas que ellos forjen. Mi triunfo será estar bien de salud para poder ver a mis hijos triunfar.

My dream is to try and improve myself to be able to orient and help my children with the goals that they forge. My triumph will be to be in good health to be able to see my children succeed.

- El sueño de nosotros es que nuestros hijos ellos logren ser lo que ellos desean ser, también pudieran ser parte de una gran empresa de redes de mercadeo y ellos pueden expandirse en otros países y que sean empresarios con principios y valores fundamentales.

Our dream for our children is for them to be what they want to be, also to be part of a successful network marketing business which they can expand to other countries and to be business people with principles and values.

- Mi sueño para mis 3 hijos es que estudien a una universidad y tengan una maestría, para un buen futuro en el trabajo en su familia y en el mundo y que no se olviden de sus raíces hispanas.

My dream for my three children is that they study in a university and obtain a Master's degree to have a good professional future, family life, and that they never forget their Hispanic roots.

- El sueño que tengo es ver a mis hijos en la universidad y que terminen una carrera profesional y puedan contribuir a la sociedad, a mi hijo me gustaría verlo como un abogado y a mi hija como una maestra o doctora es por eso que estoy tratando de motivarlos desde ahora para que ellos lo puedan lograr el día de mañana y así tengan un buen futuro esto es lo que me gustaría a mi pero siempre apoyar sus decisiones por que ellos tienen que elegir lo quieren estudiar y ser en un futuro y no forzarles a algo que no les guste, para nosotros los padres es una gran tarea estar en comunicaron con nuestros hijos para saber que es lo que ellos desean y compartir sus intereses e ideas.

The dream I have is to see my children in the university, to have a professional career and to be able to contribute to society, for my son I would like to see him become a lawyer and my daughter a teacher or doctor, this is why I am trying to motivate them...so that they have a good future, this is what I would like but I always support their decisions because they have to choose what they want to study and be in the future and not force them to be something they do not like for parents it is grand task to communicate with our children in order to know what it is they want and to share their interests and ideas.

- What do I want my kids to do when they grow up?  
I want xxx to be a Lawyer.

I want xxx to be a model or cooker [chef].

I want xxx to be a reporter.

- Para mi los sueños para mis hijos lo que quiero motivar y apoyar.

For me the dreams of my children is what I want to motivate and support.

These perspectives will be analyzed in greater depth in Chapter V; overall parents found this exercise extremely rewarding and positive and demonstrated optimism and high expectations for their children's future. The study's findings relative to this guiding question were relevant in that they may serve to further debunk the prevailing belief that Hispanic parents are indifferent and have low expectations regarding their children's futures. Finally, the findings supported existing research studies with Hispanic parents which have revealed high expectations.

#### ***Guiding Question 4***

How do Hispanic parents perceive the summer parenting institute to be valuable and constructive?

The data analyzed to address the fourth and final research question were culled principally from the daily class evaluations which the parents filled out at the culmination of the class sessions, a mid-class evaluation form, and observer notes from a focus group conducted at the end of the course.

These surveys contained two types of questions, Likert-style check-off items and open-ended questions. The results are presented in order of classes; recurring themes will be coalesced and analyzed in Chapter V. Finally, as these surveys were used initially to evaluate the class sessions, not all of the questions necessarily relate to this research

question. The results are thus presented only for those questions which provide data on the research questions; the original evaluation forms can be found in Appendices E & F.

The first class evaluation asked students three questions with a Likert-type scale; the three possible responses were *De ninguna forma* (in no way), *Un poco* (a little) and *Bastante/Mucho* (a lot).

### ***Question 1***

Was it useful working in groups with your classmates?

*¿Fue útil trabajar en grupos con sus compañeros?*

### ***Question 2***

Did you feel comfortable working in groups with your classmates?

*¿Se sintió cómodo(a) trabajando con sus compañeros de clase?*

### ***Question 3***

Did you feel comfortable volunteering your ideas in the group activity?

*¿Se sintió cómodo(a) voluntando sus ideas en la actividad de grupos?*

Table 5

#### ***Class Evaluation Results Session 1***

Question	Response		
	Not at all	A little	A lot
#1 Was it useful working with classmates?	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	6 (100%)
#2 Did you feel comfortable working in groups with your classmates?	0 (0%)	1 (17%)	5 (83%)
#3 Did you feel comfortable volunteering your ideas in the group activities?	0 (0%)	2 (33%)	4 (77%)



The open-ended question on the first class evaluation was: What part of the session did you find most useful?

**Open-ended question responses.**

- Para mi todo en general en dos preguntas, puse solo un poco. Porque es el primer dia me sentí un poco timida la siguiente clase será mejor.

For me in general on two questions I only put a little bit. Because it is the first day I felt a little timid, the next class will be better.

- Fue interesante saber sobre las escuelas y nuestro distrito escolar.

It was interesting to know about the schools and our school district.

- Caminar con los compañeros a escribir preguntas en cada uno de los poster que están pegados en la pared

To walk with my classmates to write questions in each of the posters that were attached to the walls

- Fue muy útil porque yo pensaba que este curso era para aprender ingles nadamas pero me siento muy contenta de asistir por que estoy aprendiendo cosas muy importantes para la educación de mis hijos. Ya que me gusta involucrarme en sus actividades para motivarles a que ellos aprendan.

It was useful because I thought that this course was only for learning English but I felt very content to attend because I am learning very important things for my children's education. As I already involve myself in activities to motivate them to learn.

- La presentación con las compañeras y preguntas sobre las necesidades de familias sobre el pueblo y escuelas

The presentation with classmates and questions about the needs of families, about the town and schools

- La conversación

The conversation

The second class evaluation asked students 3 questions with a Likert-type scale and an open-ended question, the survey questions were related more to the second research question, however, the open-ended question asked students what was something useful that they learned in the class: ¿Qué fue algo útil que aprendió usted hoy?

**Class evaluation responses.**

- Los ideas para involucrarnos en los estudios académicos con nuestros hijos

The ideas for involving ourselves in the academic studies of our students

- La conversación

The conversation

- Algunos de los consejos de experiencia vivida de los padres de Señor Cascone y la señora que llevo a supervisarnos (BOE member)

Some of the real-life experience/advice from Mr. Cascone's parents and the woman who came to supervise us (BOE member)

- Aprender todo sobre involucramiento para ayudar a los niños

To learn about involvement to help our children

- Aprendimos diferentes factores ayudar a nuestros hijos comunicarse y escucharlos y sobre todo apoyarlos.

We learned different factors to help our children communicate, and listen and above all support them.

- Como involucrarme con mis hijos en las actividades escolares como ayudarles con las tareas.

How to involve myself with my children in school activities and to help them with homework

- Comprender a los niños y enseñarles a escucharlos para lograr a llegar a la universidad.

To understand children and teach them to listen so that they might accomplish going to university

- Me gusto de lo que hablamos, aprendí muchas cosas. Gracias.

I liked that which we discussed, I learned many things, thank you.

- Aprendí muchas cosas porque todos dieron diferentes puntos de vista, aprendí de todos especialmente lo importante que es nuestra participación con nuestros hijos.

I learned a lot of things because everyone gave different points of view, I learned from everyone especially the importance of our participation with our children.

- Esta noche fue algo muy bien todo.

Tonight was something very good, everything.

- Estoy muy contenta por todo la conversación que hubo, gracias como sobre llevar los niños (Childcare).

I am very content for all the conversation, thank you for the availability of childcare.

At the midpoint of the course, parents were given an opportunity to reflect on the experience to date and were asked:

¿Hasta ahora, cuáles aspectos, partes o actividades del curso han sido los más útiles para usted?

Up until now, what aspects, parts or activities of the course have been most useful for you?

**Midyear evaluation responses.**

- Todo lo que estamos aprendiendo es de gran ayuda para nosotros como padres.

All that we are learning is of great help to us as parents.

- Nunca he tenido este tipo de información entonces todo para mí ha sido y será muy importante “gracias”.

Never have I had this type of information, therefore for me it has been and will be very important, thank you.

- La orientación escolar, aprender a usar las computadoras

The school orientation, and learning to use the computers

- Gracias todo ha estado bien me gusta mucho las conversaciones y aprendiendo mucho todo ha sido útiles.

Thank you for everything, it has been great, I like the conversations very much and learning alot everything has been useful.

- El hecho de explorar sitios en la computadora con respeto a la escuela y Bing Translator muy importante y aprender mucho sobre experiencias de compartir conversación con otros padres interesados en tales programas.

The activity of exploring computer sites about the school district and Bing Translator were very important and to learn a lot about experiences of other parents through conversations has been interesting.

- Todo me ha ayudado para mejorar la educación de mis hijos.

Everything has helped me to improve the education of my children.

- Todos han sido muy útiles.

Everything has been very useful.

On the last day of the institute, a culminating class discussion was conducted to bring closure to the class and to serve as a forum for parents to share their final thoughts on their experiences in the class. Notes were taken during the course of the conversation and transcribed into electronic format. The following section contains the instructor's note's verbatim as recalled from the class discussion.

**Closure roundtable discussion response field notes.**

***Question 1: How do you feel to be finishing?***

- A lot of information, to motivate us to better our children
- We wish we could have more time and continue, we don't want to stop doing what we are motivated to do right now. The book *Chicken Soup for the Soul* is a *tesoro* (treasure).
- *Contenta* (happy), would be interested in continuing another course, maybe in computers, it's important for us to put into practice the theory which we have learned. Thank you for the incentive chart, the kids love it and are very motivated by it.
- *Contenta* (happy), it has been *bonito* (nice), to meet with others, talk together, relate to one another, the class gave us an opportunity to talk about our dreams and to talk with our children about their dreams, we never really have the opportunity to do that.

- There are many opportunities for people for parents in this country but people have to take advantage of them.

***Question 2: What have you enjoyed about the classes? Why?***

- It is a good step to start to form an equipo or team.
- The class has given one motivation to feel good about oneself
- Learning from one another, for example parents with older children
- It's like a soup, each person is like an ingredient; just like the book.

***Question 3: have your children asked you about the class? What did you tell them?***

- My kids told me you have to go, you can't miss the class, you tell us we can't miss practice and school and you have to go.
- They were very enthusiastic about us participating; they looked forward to Mondays since we were coming to the library for the class. They were upset that we would no longer be coming to the program.
- My daughter had progressed in reading over the summer and my son is more interested in reading now that we are taking a more active interest.

***Question 4: What changes do you foresee in the way you communicate with the school and teachers?***

- Going to use website more to access information

- Will try and use e-mail to communicate with teachers
- Will prefer to just talk to teachers in person when I drop off my kids. It's easier for me since I don't have good technology skills and I don't write that well.

***Question 5: What can the school district do to continue to help you?***

- Computer and technology trainings
- Ongoing homework tips
- How do we receive more information about our children?
- Information on how we can get more involved

The fourth guiding question explored what aspects of the summer program parents found most constructive. These parental perspectives will be analyzed in greater depth in Chapter V; however, overall parental feedback was overwhelmingly positive. More specifically, parents found the communication and collaboration with their classmates positive and constructive. They expressed an interest in continuing to learn and expressed a bittersweet sentiment about the program coming to a conclusion. The study's findings relative to this guiding question were relevant in that they may serve to reinforce and validate best practices in CLD program design and implementation; the findings supported much of the existing research studies with Hispanic parents which have revealed a willingness to work collaboratively with schools when there is perceived respect, trust, and value to what is being learned.

**Summary**

The data presented in this chapter were collected during the planning and implementation of a six-week summer institute for Spanish speaking parents with students enrolled in the district's English as a Second Language program. The data were

originally collected to learn more about the prospective participants, as well as to evaluate the program while it was in progress. The focus of this study was to more closely analyze this data in the context of the research and literature on parental involvement of Hispanic parents.

The data which were presented within this chapter and which will be analyzed in the following chapter were extracted from the following sources: a parental intake survey, daily class evaluations, and reflective class assignments. The overall themes on which the data analysis focused and were positioned against the research were as follows: parent learning goals, parent aspirations for their children, and what parents found most constructive about the learning experiences.